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Beyond Agnosticism

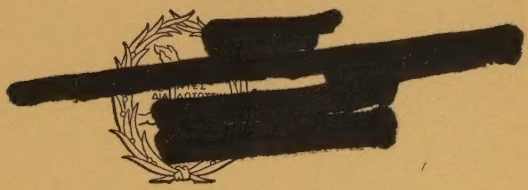
Beyond Agnosticism

A BOOK

FOR TIRED MECHANISTS

By BERNARD IDDINGS BELL

Warden of St. Stephen's College
Columbia University



Harper & Brothers Publishers
NEW YORK AND LONDON
1929

BEYOND AGNOSTICISM
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First Edition

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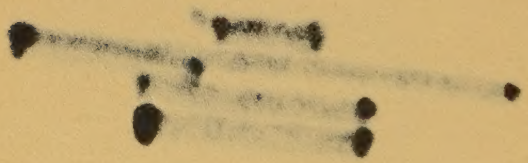

To My Son
Bernard Lee Bell

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Beyond Agnosticism

I

By Way of Introduction

A Pilgrim explains a little in advance

I HAVE attempted to write a book for men and women who have been out of college for a few years, and for others who are feeling the strain of life's responsibility, who find easy and purchasable pleasures quite unsatisfactory, and who are saying to themselves that there must be some reason for living which their materialistic experience has never enabled them to discover. The first reaction of this group is towards cynicism. They become agnostics not only about God but about life and about themselves.

I have written with a full and glad recognition of the discoveries of modern science and with modern philosophy taken into account. This is no fundamentalist volume. Neither is it a modernist volume, for the modernist offers no solution to the problem raised by mechanistic agnosticism. The attempt is to assist the reader to face his own prob-

lem of disillusionment and then to consider a possible reconstruction for his own religion, a reconstruction which does not deny the ancient Christian Faith but seeks to see that Faith in terms of the knowledge and actual difficulty of the moment.

This book is the product of certain pain and travail, in soul and mind, by which I have passed from scepticism to religion. I offer it with humility. My pathway may not be exactly that of any other man. I do not pretend to be an adequate guide. But, possibly, there may be something helpful to others in this book. I hope so.

When I went to college, in 1903, I took with me an assumed allegiance to the Episcopal Church, in which I had been brought up in that school of thought which then called itself Evangelical, but which now would probably be given the name of Fundamentalist. By the time I was through my Freshman year, that religion had been demolished. I then searched about here and there, in the philosophical realm, looking for a sane theory of life. It was a troublous time for me. My chief comfort now, as I recall those days, is that I had the grace not publicly to shout forth my negations. Happily I knew, even then, that what a man disbelieves is of no moment to anyone. It is only his convictions that matter. At one time I rested content for a few

weeks in scientific mechanism; but even my adolescent mind was shrewd enough to see that the inevitable end of that way of looking on life is cynical despair. How to avoid that despair became the absorbing task of my inner and intellectual life.

In my university there was no one to whom I could naturally go for guidance in such matters. The campus religious leaders seemed to us undergraduates to be truly blind leaders of the blind, vastly more concerned with analysis than with synthesis; and as for the philosophers, they were hair-splitting pedants, or at least that was what the students felt. About that time I came to know a quiet priest of God in a parish near my university. He was an Anglo-Catholic. He wore clothes strange to me, did things I failed to understand; but he had a winsomeness that came from inner peace. He did not bother much to argue with me. He quite understood that my literalistic and legalistic Protestantism had had to go. He also understood why I, at least, could not become a Roman Catholic. He had himself listened to all the patter of the mechanist, and yet was not afraid. He never, as I remember, denounced modern foolishness at all. He loved, and understood, and said his prayers. I do not think he has ever known how much he helped me. He was an humble man. He managed to show me, rather

than to tell me—most illuminating discovery of my life—that all truth must be paradoxical and that the Deity must be a synthesis of opposites, a synthesis impossible of human resolution. With that conviction I began at last my adult search for God.

Then, three years later, when I was in a theological seminary, more than a little oppressed by the stifling smell of controversies long dead, I ran across a book by Gilbert K. Chesterton, called *Orthodoxy*. The brilliance with which he defended the super-rationality of religion gave renewed courage to me in my searching. I felt that, like him, I too had made my own theology, only to find it a dull copy of a more brilliant orthodoxy—an orthodoxy dulled by our modern world, Catholic and Protestant alike, in too much verbiage, but full of glory when one scrubbed it clean of its Reformation, and Counter-Reformation, dirt. And so I was ordained, on the Feast of St. Thomas the Doubter, 1910.

From then on, God has become ever more and more real, although even the Apostle never felt more vividly than I how fragmentary and uncertain is any human vision of the Unseeable Reality. Faith is still to me a venture into sanity, not an achievement all complete. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not

seen. Still do I cry, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." But more certain becomes my confidence, with every year that comes and goes. Nor do I believe that this is due to self-hypnosis. I am sure that it is caused, rather, by intrinsic necessity. Except in terms of God, the universe and my own life within it are meaningless folly, hopelessly irrational. Except for God and the search for Him, I must of necessity lose my mind altogether. Only by the exercise of more than reason can reason be preserved. Logic alone ends in the suicide of logic—and often in the suicide of the logician. Sometimes it seems to me that our intellectual world of the moment is more than slightly insane. In our thinking, perhaps, we should be better off if we had more "doubts of the instrument" of thought, and less doubt of the security of the objective of thought. I am sure that were it not for my trying to live in a world, not illogical but rather superlogical, I should probably long since have surrendered. Because of very honesty of purpose, life without God becomes more and more intolerable. This I know from my own experience, and I am in consequence able to understand with compassion both current despairs and that avid hunger for religion which is becoming vocal all about us. With all my heart I wish to help. I well know my limitations. I am

no sufficient guide. Still, though I am not that Light, I can bear witness of that Light, which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.

With such desire I faced weekly a group in the Lent of 1928. The Church Club of New York had asked me to lecture to a class of from five hundred to eight hundred thoughtful and mature people, about the Christian religion in the light of those modern problems of thought which face men and women who attempt to use their reason. In the group were prominent physicians, judges in the courts, teachers in schools and universities, leaders in business and social life, and a good many men and women in their early twenties, most of them lately emerged from our institutions of higher learning. To this nucleus of people very much in earnest, who came each Monday afternoon to St. Thomas's Church, were added those transients who merely happened in. To talk to such a group would have challenged anyone to speak forth his faith with as much earnestness, thoughtfulness and sincerity as lay within him.

Each week I tried to tell these people what God has come to mean to me—not only to the saints and sinners of the past, but also to me. More I could not do. With less I dared not be content. Much of what I had to say I had said before, chiefly to pro-

fessors and students in colleges: at Princeton, Wellesley, Amherst, Williams, Chicago, Cornell, St. Stephen's. Some of it had from time to time appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*. When the lectures were over, I was asked by many people to make a book out of them. I have done it. I have added some things which had to be omitted at St. Thomas's for lack of time. I have a little rewritten, but not much. To help in the development of a mysticism which is beyond reason and yet is in no respect antirational or obscurantist, I send forth this profession of my faith.

II

The Gods of the Multitude

Wherein the Pilgrim estimates and seeks to escape the religion of the great majority

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As I look back now, from the viewpoint of a revived hold upon God, at those gropings after Reality which succeeded my earlier reaction from religion, I see quite plainly that one thing which hindered me was an inability rightly to estimate the actual religious situation of most of the people round about me. I acquiesced in a usual, and false, assumption that the great mass of the people—indifferent as it plainly was to Christianity, a religion with which it did not openly quarrel but which for the most part it ignored as a life motivation—was to be regarded as without any religion at all. All around me were people who insisted that this was so. Therefore I assumed that either the Christian Church must be unusually stupid or its message must be hopelessly outgrown. Otherwise it would surely appeal winningly to these spiritually hungry souls. This seems, in the light of more adequate observation, a curious

delusion. Our world is not spiritually empty. We are absorbed in sacrifice to gods which seem to most people rich and satisfying. Our people are not being spiritually starved. We have our deities, most of them crude and obvious, which satisfy. The first thing necessary is to see what is the actual religion of this supposedly irreligious mob. It may possibly be that there are much worse faiths than those of tradition.

A professor of sociology once asked me if I had ever noted that the Christian religion has usually made strong appeal only to rural, simple, and Arcadian peoples, or else to those who are urbane, sophisticated, and disillusioned. The more I have thought about this interesting generalization, the more nearly true it seems. "Observe," he went on, "the day into which Christianity was born. Compared with it, every succeeding age seems a bit raw. Into its making had gone centuries of Greek thought, Egyptian mysticism, and Roman political efficiency. Travel was easy and general. The externalities of life were highly civilized. Men were mature, wise, shrewd. They had tried almost everything once. This blasé order in almost no time was worshiping a new god nailed to a gibbet. But before it found that new god, the old gods had been tried out and discarded."

"You mean Pan?" I ventured.

"Pan? No!" he thundered. "The Græco-Roman world was not pagan, had not been for centuries. To be a pagan one must be a poet, a rural poet. I mean the gods worshiped by successful citizens of the world with common sense. It was these which had been found nonsensical. A world very grown up gave the apostles their chance. But," he concluded, "Jesus has no appeal to a new civilization. Its deities are more obvious."

Whatever may be the faults or virtues of our social order, no one can deny that it *is new;* and that not merely in America. Every summer hundreds of thousands of our countrywomen and a somewhat less number of our countrymen sail to the old world, in search of lost romance. Since most of them rush about so rapidly that they see Europe not as it is but of necessity as their imaginations make it, perhaps they gain the desired emotional release. They see the Tower and Westminster Abbey, but rarely Brixton or Clapham. They visit Eisenach or steam down the Rhine, but never notice the Ruhr. They are so absorbed in Potsdam that they fail to observe industrial Berlin. They see Rome in terms of the Cæsars, Florence in terms of the Medici, and Venice in terms of the Doges; and ignore the industrialism of Mussolini. They look the Parthenon over, and

overlook modern Athens. The real Europe of today is not old or urbane, but almost as young and crude as we ourselves. The culture that grew through the ages has, for good or evil, been paralyzed by the power machine. Our social structure, in philosophy, motivation, and method, is only about a century old. Our Occidental culture is indeed new.

We are also new-rich. Despite the wasteful riot of the war, it remains true that even in Europe the thing that would most astonish one who might rise from the grave of a past generation and look about him today, would be the astounding wealthiness of everybody. If the resurgent soul saw America, this feature of life would strike him deaf, dumb, and stupefied. Never was a time when so many people had so much money.

New-rich ages are apt to be like new-rich individuals. Indeed, "an age," "a civilization," "a period," are all merely ways of talking. The reality lies in the constituent individuals. We as a new-rich culture are making the same two characteristic blunders that the new-rich always make. Almost every man who makes a great deal of money very rapidly supposes that his mere possession of wealth is an index of his worth. He also is apt to imagine that he can with his means buy for himself happiness. These mistakes commonly seem folly to an

old-rich man, one who was born to property, whose father was bred with it. He knows that merely because he or his friends have it, they may not be worth it, but are quite commonly the contrary; and he has learned through experience that money is not really very valuable stuff. Happiness, which is what all men desire, cannot be purchased—it is an illusive something not for sale. The old-rich know these things well enough, but the new-rich never discover them, except by miraculous interposition of the grace of God, until they too have grown accustomed to their possessions.

Ours is an age of new-rich people, crass, crude, well-washed, all dressed up, sure that certain easily perceived goods will make life full and satisfying, and ready to pay heavily for their attainment. It is unintelligent to call such an age godless. A god is a way of talking about a good. The man in the street and his wife may not propitiate their gods adequately in words; but they sacrifice to them their lives and their children. For what more can any gods ask?

Theirs are not new gods. We are not really an original or imaginative people. The new deities are very, very old. I learned long years ago that the Christian Church does not find them very puzzling. She has been dealing with the new pantheon so long

that she has stereotyped names for those who sit upon its altars. Most of us worship the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. To say this is not to be a bigot or a fundamentalist or a puritan or a Victorian or a medievalist or any other dreadful bogie-man. It is merely to describe, calmly and with charity, in terms of motivation, our scrambling hurly-burly of a century. It is interesting to find that historic Christianity does in fact thus accurately gauge us, somewhat refreshingly unawed by us, and unafraid.

By "the World" Christianity has always meant not the glorious creation of sea and field and mountain and sky; not the beautiful relationships of men and women and children in homes or in creative labor; but rather the sordid nonsense of supposing that externalities possessed ennoble the owners, that a full fist is index of a fine spirit. That this egregious nonsense is believed today, that for the most part we sacrifice to it ourselves and our progeny, needs little demonstration. A casual perusal of some of our most widely circulating periodicals will reveal it. Therein, and from our daily press and over the radio —sometimes, one regrets to say, in the pulpit, too— sound forth the beating of the big bass drum and the blare of the trumpet in the glorification of the man with money. All the wealthy are good, and all good little boys and girls will be wealthy. Beauty,

quiet, serenity, poise, a sense of humor, let us sell them all and purchase this pearl of great price, the Cash. It would take a man incurably sentimental to deny that we are worldly.

Most of us are. Some of us—it may be you, it may be I, it may be our children—are getting a little tired of it. This money-worship, this kowtowing to the successful man—by which we always seem to mean the wealthy man—seems not so much wicked as merely a bore. To none does it seem more wearisome than to many a rich man, tired of being regarded as a perambulating pocketbook, lonesome for human affection. Some of us are becoming at least a little bit like St. Francis. I have never had quite courage enough to embrace Our Lady Poverty; but even as a youngster I perceived that Our Lady Riches is a most unstimulating spouse.

Our second deity is the Flesh. Her worship among us takes two forms, the apotheosis of appetite and the cult of comfort.

All appetites are mighty, says our modern world, and to be sacrificed unto; but chief of all the appetites is sex. We are so naïvely delighted in having discovered that the Eternal made us men and women that we sometimes seem to be forgetting that He made us anything else. Our stage, our music, our dancing, our books and magazines, our billboards,

our dress, strike strenuously the note of sex appeal. We positively rejoice in nudity and naughtiness. The advertising sections of our most popular journals contain columns of delightful advice to women about how, for a small sum, they may become beautiful and fascinating enough to attract male attention. Occasionally there is even an advertisement telling men how to become handsome and garrulous enough to be popular with women. We have devised a popular moral philosophy based upon the supposition that, if one refuses to submit to his appetites, he will contract a dread horror known as "a complex" and be in danger of the madhouse. Of course, no reputable psychiatrist gives any such advice to his clients; but we go for our psychology not to him but to the editor of the tabloid newspaper and the erudite creator of spicy fiction. Increasingly we are soaked in sex; and the people love to have it so.

But not all of us. There are those, some older in years and many not so old in whom imagination supplies the place of experience, who have arrived a little beyond the peep-show morbidity of adolescence. I find it hard, even yet, to embrace the way of the Virgin, but I was not very old before I knew that Astarte can be very stale.

As for comfort, we twentieth century people are soothingly immersed in it. Ours is a steam-heated,

well-lighted, cunningly upholstered, warm-bathed era. With almost incredible ingenuity we ward off the bumps, plane the sharp corners, "escalate" the heights. From twilight-sleep birth to narcotized death we insist upon ease. It is that without which all else is intolerable. Only to exceptional people has it yet occurred that the whole cult is petty, ignoble, unworthy of human nature. Few have as yet asked whether it can possibly be that, since our primeval ancestors millions of years ago crawled from the slime of the sea, first the animal world and then the human race have struggled on, at the cost of pain and travail and tears and death, merely that we may sit down and be comfortable. There are some at least, possibly quite a few, who are in revolt against this enervating softness, demanding hard things to be endured, crying out for a god who loves not padding.

The last of the greater gods is the Devil. It does not matter much how we picture this demonic deity; whether or not we think there actually is such a person. By "the Devil" religion means the personification, the epitome, of pride. In the old legend Satan, for pitting his small brain and will against the infinite intelligence of the Omnivolent, was expelled by Michael's host from the courts of Heaven, whereupon he came down to vex the gullible citizens of

earth. It is hardly dubious that, if Satan is the personification of conceit, ours is an age of Devil-worshipers.

The cult of cleverness is so developed that often one prays fervently that he may meet one man contentedly dull. Like those proud ancients, the Greeks, we are exceedingly witty and almost wholly void of humor. The difference between the two is that the witty man is conceited and the humorous man is humble. See, also, what we have done with æsthetic criticism. It should be in the hands of reverent men who realize that in estimating the arts they are criticizing those activities whereby man would clamber from the beasts to play among the gods; but we have given it over predominantly to groups of clever young persons who in avowedly clever papers attempt as cleverly as possible to talk about one another's cleverness. Most serious of all, what can be said about that which passes for the scientific method of arriving at Truth, save that it too lacks the saving salt of sane humility? The reference is not to the thought and activity of the leaders of the scientific world, but rather to that more characteristic phenomenon, science as understood by the man of the street, the man who says, "I shall believe in nothing which I cannot understand and prove," and thinks that thereby he has shown himself the soul

of modern wisdom. Who would live in a world so petty as to be understandable by the human mind? No real scientist. No man blessed with a sense of humor. Nobody not demoniacally possessed. It is the tnings beyond the intellect that make life worth while, that engender poetry, romance, awe, reverence. Our day minimizes these elements of life, content more and more to live within the dull limitations of the understanding. And some of us,—it may be you, it may be I, it may be our children,—a bit sophisticated, have found that petty world grotesque. We have begun to laugh.

The twentieth century seems to be sacrificing itself to goods and appetite and comfort and conceit. As long as it continues to do so, as long as these seem satisfying ends to its new, crude, and suddenly wealthy citizens, it is unlikely that any more subtle religion can make much headway. Jesus of Nazareth is an enigma to the moment. Occasionally somebody tries to dress up the Christ in modern terms —presenting him as a go-getter, a country-clubber, a master of advertising psychology. There is no god but our gods. We will make Jesus into our image. Popular though this sort of thing may be, it is of course not Christianity. Whatever else Jesus may mean, in historical religion he is at any rate the antithesis of all that our day deems of most worth.

He is poor when we would be rich. He seems to regard chastity as normal and healthy. To him comfort matters little one way or the other. He is the incarnation of humility. It can hardly be expected that he should be the chosen God of an adolescent civilization intent upon the hungry search for superficiality.

The world which has tacitly abandoned Christianity has not moved into free-thinking and rationally controlled living. It has, rather, abandoned a mature God for some crude and childish idols. Christianity must wait for a slowly emerging maturity and urbanity.

There are those of us who, wearied with strident clamor about nothing, repelled by the clash of battle for things of no particular moment, have, by chance or by God's free gift, discovered Jesus as he hangs alone upon his silent crucifix. He is poor, not because he is too weak to gain wealth but because his strength is needed elsewhere. He is chaste, not because he is too emasculated to feel the pull of passion but because that passion has been sublimated into something which includes the soul. He is emancipated from slavery to luxury and ease. He is humble, not because he is too ignorant to be proud, but because he is infinitely too wise. We have adored, as our fathers adored, and we have to our own as-

tonishment discovered that in the light of that adoration the modern world is like a pageant produced by mere mechanicals. Reality lies elsewhere, at an altar where Jesus gives to disillusioned souls a peace which is not as the world gives. As civilization grows more experienced, there will be more and more such persons. Meanwhile, it is absurd to expect Christianity to appeal to the modern world. Can babies know beauty?

III

The Larger Agnosticism

In which it is more than intimated that the higher humanitarianism is bankrupt

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The so-called "free-thinking liberalism" of the vast majority of those who today esteem themselves emancipated from the ancient faiths, is nonexistent. They have not progressed, but retrogressed. They are content to think and act in obedience to carnal rather than intellectual impulses. Of them it may be said, to use St. Paul's direct phrase in its vigorous Elizabethan translation, that their god is their belly. It is well always to distinguish with care between those who reject Christianity because it interferes with their appetites—the great majority of doubters —and those who forsake it because they deem it intellectually hampering. In the preceding chapter I have endeavored to look at the first group and to arrive at a picture of them in terms of their real motivations. I should like now to forget them for the rest of this book. They are unlovely. Nor are they of primary importance, since in the long run

it is the people who think that matter, rather than the greater number who live on bases less than intellectual. From now on let us concern ourselves with those who doubt, not because they are indifferent to Truth but because they are on search for Truth. They deserve a real and sympathetic attention.

Twenty years ago, when I was seeking help in the making of a philosophy of life, the chief task facing those who wished to be advocates of religion was apparently to persuade people that God was important. There was then abroad a sceptical agnosticism, in which I for the time shared, about the Central Person beneath and behind and through the visible universe. That agnosticism is common today. It is a thing even harder to combat than it then was—not because the idea of God is less reasonable than it was in 1910, but because our contemporary pessimism has widened its scope. A generation ago we might doubt God, but we doubted little else. Men did not, for example, doubt themselves—they did not doubt the worthwhileness of humanity. Indeed, there was about that time much in vogue a thing, vestigial remnants of which are still to be found lying about, which called itself humanitarian religion—a faith which regarded man in himself as almost if not quite divine. People who scorned supernaturalism told you with enthusiasm

that they believed in man and in his future. They sought as sufficient supreme activity the promotion of honor among men for men in a true fraternity. They were convinced that in human love was to be found a perfect substitute for that Divine love the existence of which seemed to them at best only of academic interest.

Nowadays men may not believe in God more, but they certainly believe in man less. There are reasons for the growth of this newer and wider agnosticism —this doubt about the worth of human beings. The war was a bitter blow to human self-esteem. The whole struggle was brutal, stupid, all out of harmony with the higher humanitarianism. Our vaunted progress, all our supposed emancipation from what we called the superstitions of religion, all our trust in human reason, all our deification of humanity, resulted only in the most horrible, and futile, butchery in history. We who had said that men were as gods found out, or so it seemed to us, that men were merely stupid, self-destructive beasts. The war helped on the new agnosticism.

Other things helped too. During the last century science rediscovered for us that in respect to our bodies we were animals and from the animals. This was a great discovery. We have dwelt upon it and talked about it and taught it to our youngsters, with

marvelous forgetfulness that because we are beasts it does not of necessary logic follow that we are nothing but beasts. If you tell a generation, from babyhood through the university, that it is animal, and fail to tell it about the parts of human living which are not animal, it is apt to believe what it has been taught. And it is partly at least for that reason that in the ears of a generation so taught, as ours has been, the higher humanitarianism is apt to sound supremely silly. A generation which sought not to love God, but in His place to enthrone man, finds that it has children who refuse to honor man either.

They have discovered that man is not divine; that he is very, very much of the earth, earthy. Our forefathers knew that too. The only hope for humanity, as they saw it, was that it might struggle on toward God with the compassionate help of God. They believed in human depravity, but they also believed in God's grace. Our children believe in the depravity but they know next to nothing of the grace. Our children know at least this, that in our overestimate of man's natural ability and virtue we were fools. They cannot see that we behave like gods at all. They have no faith in human divinity, even in that of their fathers and mothers. They insist that men are beasts, born to live for comfort,

for appetite, for sensory enjoyments, and for wealth. It is as aspirants for such things that they esteem their elders. Our pretensions and our accomplishments seem to them contradictory. They smell an odious hypocrisy.

The higher humanitarianism is today knocked into a cocked hat. Thomas Huxley doubted God a bit but rhapsodized of human love. His grandson, Aldous Huxley, ridicules human love too, and writes long, and horribly tiresome, novels to show that love is only a rather nasty physical appetite which rules us, and fools us in the end. Dean Vida Scudder at Wellesley has recorded how shocked she was to find that her students in later years laughed at Wordsworth's great "Ode to Duty"—"stern daughter of the Voice of God, who art a light to guide"—because Duty was such an antiquated and ridiculous concept in their eyes. Professor Krutch, who is one of the editors of the (American) *Nation,* in a recent article in the *Atlantic Monthly,* puts the whole viewpoint with candor, even with bluntness. "Many things," he says, "we have come to doubt—patriotism, self-sacrifice, respectability, honor; and the wreck of love is conspicuous. . . . We have grown used to a godless universe, but we are not yet quite accustomed to one which is loveless as well. Only when we have so become shall we realize what atheism really

means." Dr. Krutch's words seem to maintain that this ultimate atheism means something very fine. When religion, duty, honor, patriotism, self-sacrifice, respectability, and love are all discarded as ridiculous superstitions, then the race is going to be emancipated. But as you read him you perceive that even he is whistling to keep up his courage and is inwardly somewhat appalled at the outcome of his own logic. If this were merely a matter of an article by a single misanthropic philosopher, it would not matter much. Its significance lies in the fact that this way of looking at things is common. Our children are saying—maybe some of us are—what the cynical author of Ecclesiastes said long ago, "That which befalleth the sons of men is that which befalleth the animals—the same thing to both. As the one perishes, so perishes the other. Man hath no preëminence above the beasts. All is foolishness."[1]

What is to be said about all this? The thing that needs to be said about it is that it is both buncombe and a bore. We must admit, of course, that man is a beast. That is where he starts from. The thing that always has distinguished him, however, from the rest of the beasts—the thing which the cynicism of the moment forgets—is that man has not been and is not content to remain on that beastly level.

[1] Ecclesiastes 3:19.

He is ever struggling toward a kind of living, a set of values, that are not beastly at all. He is bent on discovering some queer thing called Truth, for instance. To get toward it he will deny animal urges and rewards. He will starve for it, slave for it, suffer for it, die for it—and count himself happy to have had the chance. The modern behaviorist may call him a fool for his pains. Dr. Krutch may esteem him an unemancipated ass. But he will do it and rejoice in it. He will value Truth higher than wealth or popularity. And when he does deny the quest and behaves as a rational animal would behave, it makes him miserable and he knows that he is a cad. Beasts who are only beasts do not behave that way. Man also, starting on the beast level, pursues a thing he calls Beauty. The funny fellow cannot even tell you what Beauty is. It is a will-o'-the-wisp, but he struggles toward it. He even tries to copy and express it, in what he calls the Arts. To show forth one tiny bit of it he will endure privations, bitter ones. And whenever he gives up the search for it, if he does, he knows himself for a poor thing and hates his own abandonment. In the pursuit of this Beauty he knows lies a part at least of his destiny. This is not characteristic of beasts who are nothing but beasts. And man also, starting from the level of the beast, pursues Goodness in guise of Love—not

merely love in a physical or mating sense, which seems to be all of love known to such persons as Bertrand Russell and Havelock Ellis and Joseph Krutch, but love as a passionate surrender of himself, a sacrifice of his own happiness to others, that in his dying there may be for them new life. And man, starting from the level of the beasts, pursuing Truth, Beauty, Love, has perceived that these are all attributes of a great Reality—for the perfectness of which his heart is hungry. He calls this Reality "God," and he knows that when he turns toward this Reality he somehow is lifted into a being more real than beastly being.

All of this is a part of human experience, and yet the modern cynic would seem to scorn it. All human history cries that life is a search for a Reality far beyond us. It is that struggle which makes life the magnificent adventure that it is. The cynic denies the reality of the struggle, because forsooth it is a struggle. Because man has not arrived, he shouts that man has never started. To him all man's good dreams are nightmares. To his mind man is less worthy than the beasts; he is a beast who, alone among beasts, supposes in a ridiculous idiocy that he is not a beast. From the points of view of logic, common sense, pragmatic test, and fact, the whole of this position, despite its scientific

pretensions, seems foolishness. Happily there are many who realize this foolishness. What can be done for them?

At least we must recognize that the old humanity worship cannot be brought back. Man is not a noble hero. He is in struggle from beastliness to godliness. In him is the great warfare. The animal within him urges him to remain content with the pursuit of things and the fulfillment of appetite. But Reality keeps calling him to an adventure toward Truth and Beauty and Goodness. The beast within him cries "Grab," while something else cries "Give." He knows the worth of honor, but he is not always honorable. He sees the beauty of courage, but frequently he is a coward. Duty is to him compelling, but it does not always compel. He knows what love may be, but over and over again degrades it or denies it. He is not to be trusted, though he is to be loved. He is not to be worshiped, though he is to be respected. He is pitiable. He is enviable. His life is a joke, and a tragedy, and a sublime quest. It is not in him as now he is that his true significance lies. He is only on the way.

The end and the meaning of life lie in a final Reality now aspired toward but hard to understand, to be apprehended but never comprehended. Con-

templation of the end toward which mankind is struggling is what the world needs now, as it has always needed it. It is of this contemplation that religion fundamentally consists, religion which we must have if life is to regain its dignity. It must of course be real religion, not a socially conventionalized substitute, of the sort ascribed to the heroine of a late popular novel, of whom it is written, "She had no religion beyond a sufficient initiation into its ceremonies to permit attendance on them, on social occasions, without a *faux pas*." Religion is to a human being either the most serious and vital of human activities or it is worse than nothing. Our religion must be emancipated from social humbuggery, with all its apparatus of dress clothes and rented pews and sycophantic parsons and patronizing people. Ours must be a religion wherein and whereby you and I and our children may lift our hearts in self-freed adoration of that Perfection which we long to embrace; religion wherein and whereby we may forget food and drink and motors and worldly position and organized amusements and clever trickiness of speech, and all the rest of the animal palavering which owns and hampers us, none of which satisfies us, most of which stifles us; and feed in our hearts on that which—cynics to the

contrary notwithstanding—is all that we long to be. We need religion, religion wherein and whereby we may look on a perfected Personality whose suffering-tested eyes speak Truth, whose torn body is more beautiful than flesh can be until the Spirit has battled with it and conquered it, whose Goodness both shames us into penitence and cleanses us into decency. We are really athirst for Reality, we modern people—but afraid to drink the wine of Him lest journalistic cynics with sharp tongues perhaps may sneer at us. How long shall we thus be self-conscious and cowardly? How long shall we ignore the race's age-bought wisdom? How long shall we deny the validity of that struggling on which alone makes a man's life a thing of meaning? Not long, I think.

And how long shall we remain content with an irreligious educational system, with schools and colleges and universities which regard the mystical experiment as a polite appendage to life, whose chapels are tolerated survivals of the past: schools and colleges and universities where youth is initiated into almost every craft except that craft which matters most to the race; where men and women become alert and skilled in looking back and down, but awkward and self-conscious when they try to look

forward and up; where all man's dreams seem fanciful and all man's heroisms futile; where students are taught all things else but how to approach in natural and unaffected adoration that destiny of man which is God? One may pray to that same God, not long.

Prisoners we may be, as Zechariah said, prisoners within the flesh, but prisoners we are of hope. Even now are we the sons of God. Only in the absolute Reality can lie our meaning. As says Aristotle, ἡ φύσις τέλος ἐστί, the nature of a thing lies in its end —not in its origin. "For what a thing is when it is fully developed that it is, whether we speak of a horse—or a man." Our real being lies in the future. Our citizenship is not here and now. The contemplation of Reality and of Eternal Values is our stronghold. It is interesting to have some conception of our origin, but the really important thing is that we have some notion of our destiny.

Until a man has thought things through at least this far,—until he has turned from the past toward the future, from the flesh out of which he has come to that state of being toward which he may aspire,—there is no use talking to him about religion. Possibly that is one of the things Jesus had in mind when he said, "Except ye be converted [*i.e.* turned about] and become as children, ye cannot see the Kingdom

of God."[2] For the child instinctively looks forward toward a possible maturity. It is only the exhausted, the impotent, the senile, who in search for purpose turn to that from which they grew.

[2] Matthew 18:3.

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IV

Fear and Faith

The Pilgrim perceives a necessary paradox and makes an affirmation

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It is the thesis of this chapter that knowledge is not enough for the facing of the challenges of life and learning, and for the maintenance of a creative interest in life sufficient to motivate human living. Indeed, knowledge alone is perhaps worse than not enough, because knowledge, unless supplemented, is apt to remove from us that courage which results from ignorance, without establishing any new basis for courage. Thus we are rendered cowardly in meeting that which we come to know life has and holds for men. A fool may rush in where angels fear to tread, but there is ever-pressing danger that the informed and experienced man will hesitate to rush in at all. Acquaintance with life makes us cautious. Scientific study also makes us cautious. There is more than a chance that between them they may make us so exceedingly cautious that canniness becomes craven, and we cease, in any real sense, even

to try to be the captains of our souls or the architects of our mutual fate.

To be brave one must put one's trust in some one. The ignorant man at least believes in himself. The end of the process of intellectual and moral growth surely cannot be that we become so mature and sophisticated as to believe in nothing and nobody, and so become automatically the slaves of everything and everybody. If the man of knowledge stands hesitant, a victim of life, the bemoaner of his fate, he is more miserable and more to be pitied than any fool could possibly be. If our scheme of education teaches us that, knowing things to be as they seem to be, we must of necessity conform to them; if education is to be defined, as it has in fact been defined, merely as the accommodation of man to his environment—then education is more of a curse than a blessing. Its product is apt to be the compromiser, the coward, the man who finds life drab, and is himself most deadly dull. Don Quixote was a fool, as all men know, and tilted at windmills like a fool, but with enthusiasm and a happy heart. Is it truly to be wise and sane to know so much that you tilt at nothing and are bored? Is not the sense of high romance somewhat a high price to pay, even for becoming a philosopher or a scientist? Is it a necessary price to pay? Is there no way in which

one may become wise and remain happy too? Must Galahad forever be a numskull and Merlin forever be a cynic?

At any rate, the combination of knowing and daring is difficult to make. General experience tends to remove from us one attitude toward life which is necessary to the preservation of anything like courage; and scientific study with equal sureness tends to remove another. Without either such attitude we are crippled; without both together we are helpless. Those attitudes are *love* and *hope*.

There can be no doubt that the longer we experiment with living, the harder it is to believe in the possibility of love. One means, of course, love in the sense of ultimate and intimate companionship with other than oneself, the communion of one's whole being with the being of another. We do not, to be sure, lose a sense of the power of love in terms merely of physical passion. That remains vivid, often too vivid easily to be endured when we have learned that passion does not contain *per se* that extraphysical content which adolescence is apt to suppose is of its very essence. It is not true of many young people that in respect to love they are merely animal. They are seeking something vastly more than that. In fact, the degeneration of love into lust, a proper subject for tragedy, is simply the

losing of that dream of something more. What we seek in youth through passion, what somehow every man feels he must seek and somehow find, is a knowledge that some one cares, despite our ill-deserving; that some one understands us, stupid and inarticulate though we be.

The most dreaded threat that life may hold for us lies not in pain or penury or thwarted ambition or even death; the ultimate bogie is loneliness. When we analyze man's achievements, particularly his material triumphs, we are wise if we remember what a large proportion of them are the product of a desire to escape being alone. How necessary it is, if we would understand at all man's crimes and evil accomplishments and sins, that we see that most of them, too, are primarily due to a desire to escape the tyrannous company of oneself! Such remembrance increases human charity. A priest and a woman die in a lonely New Jersey lane. Their intimate letters are printed, for the curious folk to read. It involves no condonation of their crime to note how pathetic, how heartbreaking are those letters. How lonely these two people were! In the face of that, duty and morality and parental affection and plighted fealty to God simply ceased for them to be. They dared not give one another up, lest the subsequent aloneness should drive them mad. Such

is a crime of no mere lust. Like Paolo and Francesca, they sinned and paid. One may pity them and their fellow sinners of all the generations, and still remain morally balanced. They felt overwhelmingly, in a panic, what all of us must somewhat feel all the time—heartache at our personal isolation.

Quite soon life teaches most of us that perfect comradeship with others cannot at any price be had. What is true of passionate loves is true also of our other companionships. To friends of every sort we have sought to give ourselves; and we have been misunderstood, or lied about, or used, or laughed at. We have served gladly and have found no gratitude, or next to none. Love has become for us a thing to avoid, if possible. It is too full of pain. It is too much to ask that we shall venture forth again, and again find nothing. It is easy for benevolent parsons to say, "Love one another," as though that were not merely the solvent of our mutual ills —which of course it is—but also a thing quite simple and easily to be done. How can we love other people or expect them to love us? How can we continue the attempt to bridge the great gulf fixed between one soul and every other soul? We are afraid of love, we who are no longer unfledged juvenals. Experience has taught us its lesson.

And yet—without companionship, intimate, real,

permeating, in which one may wholly give oneself, what is the use of living? We may keep busy and most of the time forget; but there come the devastating moments, unavoidable, when we remember what we have discovered: that love is dead and that we walk alone. Wife, husband, colleagues, friends: how little they can know of us or we of them. Even as we clasp our children to us, we perceive well enough that they and we are vastly strangers. We are alone. It is night, amid storms, and our little boat is very small. We have asked too much of human love, and because we have asked too much, too impossibly much from our lovers, we grow to hate them, revile them, divorce them, disown them, despise them. That is what experience does for honest human beings unless they have something wherewith to supplement the knowledge which experience brings. Love goes.

Now let us turn to science—to knowing—as a centralizing passion. Can science give, perhaps, what love cannot? There cannot be much doubt that scientific education of our modern sort is apt to take still further the joy out of living, by removing that other prop of courage, hope. This is not noticeable, perhaps, among the really great scientists of the earth. A few of them I am proud to call my friends. They are, for the most part, not at all hope-

less, cynical, despairing. But that, I have discovered, is because they know science well enough not to depend upon it for their souls' sustenance. The great minds in science know physics deeply enough to perceive the need of metaphysics. But the great scientists are few, and they are reticent people. Meanwhile the air is vocal with the noise of the hangers-on, the laboratory technicians, the merely engineers, the cocky young instructors. And it is mostly such as they who do our undergraduate teaching. It is they who write for the papers. It is they and their followers who have established in the popular mind certain beliefs and certain despairs which set the bias of the moment. Under *their* leadership we proceed scientifically to examine matter. There can be no doubt that the result is apt to be devastating to the courage of all of us.

The universe had seemed to us, when fools, to be a fairylike panorama of hill and sea and sky, of snow and slanting rain, of blazing sun or cool moon and the stars, of lights tempered by passing clouds; full of living realities, beautiful or terrible, or horrible; its crown and its control, a race of men on quest for something. But we undergo what passes current for "the scientific discipline," and we come to believe that the whole of that vast and poetic variety is only a congeries of indestructible protons

and electrons moving in invariant mathematical combinations. It is a wonderful discovery; and a most depressing one. I, even I, my body, my brain —the body and brain of my beloved—the body and brain of my enemy—all are, in the last analysis, mere whirling energies. Have I a mind, a soul? Can there be any real future before me and my fellows? Are we not mere manifestations of a blind and relentless mechanism? Biology taught our fathers that men are but beasts a little more intelligent; we accept it without question; and our children on the basis of it sometimes act like nothing more. But vastly more upsetting than "evolution" ever was, for the twentieth century man, are physical chemistry and what claims to be its first-born child, behavioristic psychology, which assure us that we are not even animals in any sense that makes an animal a thing of dignity, but after all only fields of intercleaving elements: our thoughts merely "reactions," our hopes illusory, our loves quite non-existent, our dreams a madness, our destiny a final dissolution.

Or else we turn, in a desire to escape nightmare, from the physical sciences to the social sciences, only to read again the lesson of futility. The race, we are persuaded, has over and over again striven in the erection of intricate and thoughtful civiliza-

tions, and invariably pitiless nature has leveled those creations to the dust, and with them those who have created. Moreover, again and again have come social leaders, great seers—or, at least, they were men of great dreams and hopes—with visions of social structure built upon honor and coöperation and creative interdependence. They have preached their beliefs and have suffered and died for them on many a pyre and gallows and cross. Possibly for a short time some men have believed in them a little and followed them; and then the relentless urges of the species, the appetites for food and for sex, the incurable greediness of that beast commonly called human, have quietly but with certainty either destroyed or—more intolerable—conventionalized and emasculated all to which these martyrs have borne witness.

Surely our civilization, too, must crumble into dust; our people die in fratricidal massacre; our cities be forsaken; our pomp be one with Nineveh and Tyre. Surely our hopes, too, will come to nothing; our religion be forgotten; our houses of prayer, wherein we fondly called ourselves immortal, become mere piles of moldy stones to be unearthed and chattered about, learnedly in stupid doctors' dissertations and ignorantly in the tabloid newspapers of some civilization yet unborn, and itself

doomed like ours to end in futility. Silliest of all the illusions whereby man seeks to fortify his soul is the illusion of human moral progress through the ages, an illusion for which there is literally not one scrap of scientific evidence. The world with the years grows neither vastly better nor vastly worse. There is no moral content in evolution. That equality which makes the Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady sisters under the skin is also a chronological equality. Various ages of record are much of a muchness in everything beneath the mere surface of appearance.

People with anything approaching a decent modern education know all this well enough. As far as it goes, this is all indubitably true. But it is not enough that we know it. We must face its personal implications. That is our task as honest and thinking men. How do these facts affect our lives, our purposes, our destiny? The ruck of mankind never faces anything, but we at least are honest enough to know that the facing of scientific disillusionment cannot for us be longer deferred. We do not, as might perhaps be expected, when we learn that love and hope have scientifically been proven impossible, go out and cut our throats: but most of us do, instead, grow vastly cynical and beset with moral cowardice. We become that which is more sad than men without a country; we become men without

a cause for which to live and die. Why battle for a cause when in the end all causes are lost causes? Let us eat and drink—but God knows we can no longer be merry.

In the face of this tragic necessity, itself inevitably the result of depending upon knowledge alone for one's approach to truth, we think of religion.

Surely our first reaction is to be more than a little weary as we listen to those smooth-voiced people who deny complacently that there is any great difficulty in correlating the scientific method and religious aspiration, who talk serenely of their reconciliation as though they were simply phases of the same thing; such people as suppose that the conflict is about something of minor importance, such as whether the creation of the world took place in six days of ordinary length, whether Joshua did or did not stop the sun one afternoon, whether or not Jonah for three days occupied a piscatorial residence, or whether or not the universe was geocentric to the prophet Ezekiel. It is impossible to find words which adequately will express the utter unimportance of such "problems" to any intelligent man of the moment. There is involved, however, a really important wrestling of the mind, one which is everlasting and inevitable and goes to the heart of things. It deals with nothing less important than

whether man is free or slave, mechanically determined or a person; whether life is or is not worth the living; whether or not joy and courage are possible for reasoning men.

For the preservation of sanity, not to speak of reasonable cheerfulness, there must be found some way out of the *impasse* which we have been describing. And the solution, when there does emerge a solution of this basic conflict, can never be in the nature of an amalgam—some science and some religion stirred up together in an intellectual mortar. Some religion will not do. We must have a complete venture of faith, or none at all. Some science will not do. We must have all of science, fearlessly faced, or no science at all. *Increasingly we are forced, if we are to think at all of basic things, to a recognition of the paradoxical nature of human life, and therefore of a paradoxical human approach to Truth. Man is himself a paradox, a strange creature in many ways, most strange in this, that he is an animal who, alone among animals, is perpetually in revolt against being an animal: one portion of that mathematical precision which constitutes the energetic universe, incurably resistant to its irresistible laws. His basic thinking can hardly fail to be as paradoxical as he is himself.*

We have too long been tempted to overlook this

paradox, a paradox which has been recognized by all of those who, since the dawn of human thinking, have worked out any philosophy which is tolerable. We have been tempted to estimate the problem of man as far more simple than it really is. We have supposed that it is possible to arrive at a meaning for human life in terms of objective science. "Examine the material and reason from it," urged the nineteenth century, and still urges the twentieth. "Look carefully upon the animal and ponder what you see. By doing these things you will come to understand the human. You will arrive at a comprehension of yourself." Man, disregarding the more ancient wisdoms, and doing as he has been bid by a world absorbed in science to such a degree that it fails to recognize much else, has been faithfully following this advice, until lately without much restlessness.

But now he is beginning to ask some very troublesome questions. He says to himself, and to those who have taught him: "There is something wrong somewhere. In the light of the knowledge of things and beasts, I have been duly and obediently looking at myself, and I find that I appear to be inevitably both loveless and deprived of hope. I find that all of my noblest dreams, my most beautiful visions, my most instinctive convictions seemed to be quite

baseless. I am in the position of a man who has lightened ship by throwing overboard everything that the race has held dear and believed most vital. *My philosophical ship is now so light that I can no longer steer.* This thing at which I gaze so intently, so scientifically, so cynically, cannot be really me. Is it?" Science responds, calmly, pitilessly, but somehow not quite as convincingly as of yore, "Of course this is you. What else can there be to you? Under our guidance you are observing all that is observable." But man keeps insisting: "I know myself to be all that you have pointed out. I am a congeries of energy in atoms. I am a beast. But I cannot help suspecting that there is something more to me than is included in those categories." Science responds, if it bothers to reply at all: "That is absolutely all that scientific knowledge can reveal to you. As far as science knows, there is nothing more to you; *and is there anything beyond science?*"

There are, doubtless, some people who are willing to regard this last question as merely rhetorical, and who still remain quiescent. They feel that they have acquired a tremendous knowledge, which is true, and they are willing to pay for it even at an astounding price, a price which consists of love and hope and all mad, pulsing courage. But most men find life on those terms not to be endured. They will not, can-

not stop with such an easy, simple, and ghastly solution to the problem of human life. Day by day there rises within us, within more and more of us, within some of the most brilliant and scientific of us, the ancient urge of the race, an urge as valid as the reason and quite as much a part of life, the urge which bids us trust the unseen, love the untangible, adore the more than materially substantial. *We make an act of faith,* as our fathers have been making it since man first came to be, of faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Increasingly we cry out:

"To know is not enough. To the principles of science we give all true allegiance. We deny nothing which scientific observation and reasoning therefrom have revealed to us. We turn our back on no truth ascertained by experimentation. We refuse in any sense to be obscurantist. But, we repeat it, to know is not enough. To scientists we give all honor. They know much. They know wonderful things. But they cannot explain everything. They cannot explain me.

"I am a bit of revolving energy—that is one side of the paradox; but I am a free spirit as well—and that is the other side of the paradox. I am the millionth generation from an anthropoidal ancestor—that is one side of the paradox; but I am also a poet,

a dreamer, a son of the Most High God—and that is the other side of the paradox. I see and reason and know; but also I do believe, and in the believing am as sane and as wise as in my scientific explorations. I believe, I believe in the race. I believe in the future. I believe in life. I believe in love. I believe in God."

It will not do to depend wholly upon knowledge. It is still required, as it always has been required, that man, if he would be sane, should say *"Credo ut intelligam."* It is folly to disregard either side of the paradox. To do so results quickly in a state of mind that, literally, is unbalanced. To ignore knowledge and to depend wholly upon faith is childish, but to ignore faith and to depend wholly upon knowledge is equally unwise. Even as religion without science is inevitably the parent of sentimental inanity, so science without religion is pregnant with cynical insanity.

A story about the Christ which is most full of parabolic meaning for the present moment tells how Jesus sailed one night with a few followers upon the Sea of Galilee. There arose a mighty storm. The Master lay asleep. Down upon the minds of the apostles pressed the storm, the night, the wind—the physical. How like this is to our own situation. Everywhere the physical—menacing, destructive,

crushing. It is easy to understand with what agony of soul they cried out, "Master, have you no care for us? We are perishing." Jesus said to them, "Why are ye so full of fear?" Immediately he answered his own question: "O ye of little faith." Then stretched he forth his hand to the sea; and there was a great—calm.

V

Adventure for Cynics

The Pilgrim comes to understand that Truth is Some One to be loved

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To CONSIDER again our basic problem; what is the temper of the modern mind?

What is the thought pattern not of the masses, but *of the people who matter.* There has always been government *of* the people; there has frequently been government *for* the people; but there has never been and probably never can be government *by* the people. A truer formula would seem to be "government of the people, in the interest and with the acquiescence of the people, by those who have superior intellectual capacity and equipment." It is the people with brains who govern. Even a revolution is not a mob movement, but only a transfer of power from one group of people with brains, somewhat stale brains, to another group of people with brains, brains somewhat more fresh. This, which is true of politics, is true of thinking in general. The cogitations of "the people" are almost wholly second-

hand. The masses are composed of children of God and precious souls, but their opinions are reflections rather than opinions. If I would understand which way at any time the world is moving, for good or ill, I must observe the occasional people with dynamic and original minds, the few who have the nerve to face the problems of life and to think for themselves. What these few determine shall be thought, the world at large tomorrow with certainty will be thinking.

(We know this well enough, in our moments of occasional honesty, about the smaller groups of people to which we happen to belong. It is true, for instance, in colleges. There are probably not, at the outside estimate, more than five per cent of any undergraduate group who do the ratiocination for the rest. What they decide, the rest of the students next week will think they think. Despite the necessary mediocrity of most students in colleges which try to be democratic, there are to be found in them, already leading and directing their fellows, those few determined and original persons destined to be the thought-determining group of a quarter century hence. In our institutions of higher learning that intelligent fraction of tomorrow is coming into contact with the thinking fraction of today, through faculty contacts, books, conversation. Despite the

vast amount of waste motion in our colleges, in them the thought of the future is being powerfully influenced by the thought of the present. For this reason alone do colleges have any vital significance. As far as thought is concerned, the vast majority of students may be regarded as padding, comfortable to have around although occasionally a little stifling. Whatever men may say about collegiate democracy, it is only the few with brains who justify keeping school.)

What, then, is the state of mind of the people who think? In our time the world of thought, the world of the thinking few, has tended to become a realm of puzzled stagnation.

True, it does not at first glance seem a sterile era. The world's mentally superior citizens appear to be alert enough: doing things, making things, chattering about things, financing things—hopping about with unprecedented activity, hurrying. But that very excitement is a symptom of instability. Those who are sure of themselves never need to hurry. Hysteria is often an index that men have lost their way. It is also true that our contemporaries vehemently amuse themselves, with a vigor somewhat exhausting even to observe. That too is a sign of insecurity of mind. Happy people do not ask to be amused. Many current pleasures are the result of an effort

on the part of the participants to hide a void of purpose which they would find unendurable the instant they were quiet and remembered.

We moderns in fact, little as we may wish to acknowledge it, have come to the place where those who think do not know what rational purpose, if any, is back of life; we are unable to discover any reason for things, any standard by which to measure things, any principle according to which things may be explained. It is natural that we should face this fundamental lack as little as we possibly can, but it is none the less present and to be faced. Its effect upon subconscious attitudes is ever present and powerful.

In this distressing state of mind our current reliance on science is of little help. The knowledge of things inanimate does not explain that which lives, and all the animals from the amœba to the ape fail to throw much light upon the destiny of man. Following the purely scientific technique which is the fashion, we have come to what seems an inevitable *impasse;* and, because a meaningless world is a stupid world, we are more and more bored. There are those who let one know, in strident terms, that if one is not bored he cannot possibly be modern. Enthusiasms, moral purpose, a sense of direction in life, according to such persons,

are all sure signs that one has never looked life in the face. Surely nobody who is acquainted with the intellectuals of the moment can doubt that a bored cynicism is prevalent, and no one ought to doubt that the reason it exists is that the ordinary keen-minded person of the moment has not been able himself to discover any integrating objective for living.

This is the root cause of the *moral* disintegration which is all about us. The portentous thing among us ethically is a decay of purpose. To be sure, it is bad if men be dishonest, gluttonous or bibulous, if they indulge in fornication and the successive polygamy made possible by divorce. Such things are regrettable, but they are as nothing in wickedness compared to the floppy driftiness, the vague and swampy meanderings which are due to decay in positive effort. Provided one loves enough, something can be done with the adulterer and the drunkard; but who can do anything for him who cares for nothing, to whom nothing matters? Even insults fail to rouse his righteous or unrighteous resentment. He is apt to be that deadliest of pacifists, not the one who is too proud to fight but the one who is too humble to fight. The most immoral man is he who has ceased to strive toward a something

greater than himself. To abandon such struggling is the crime against life.

The man who commits such a crime does so usually, I am quite sure, because he conceives of the race, as it is, to be an end in itself, the tiptop final achievement, beyond which can be conceived no greater. Sometimes one hears things said which seem to imply that such a conviction of his own importance characterized man only before the dawn of contemporary science; and that nowadays everybody knows that all life is an evolution, of which we are only a transient and developing part. That sort of talk sounds well, and pleases, in that it enables us to look down upon our ancestors and their wisdom—always a popular and desired amusement; but it is nevertheless contrary to fact. The modern man, the scientific man, is the one who is most apt to explain himself only on the basis of that from which he has evolved; who thinks of himself as an emerged end. The old-fashioned man of religion may have been in many respects ignorant and foolish, but at least he was never dunce enough to think in those terms. He was always attempting, the poor benighted soul, to measure himself in the light of that toward which he was evolving. He was quite sure that there were vast journeys yet to go; his life was pilgrim's progress; his goal was

citizenship in a city yet to come. In short, he was a dissatisfied and therefore a happy man. It is the modern man who has stopped growing, stopped because he can visualize nothing toward which to grow.

This is a serious matter, for in any organism to stop growing means to die. Within the race, despite our activity, permeating all our magnificent, material, and mechanistic development, is present an intellectual dry rot, a disintegrating fungus which attacks personality, a morbidity in the species. Because men have lost hope, because the few who set for the rest of us our trend of thought have been unable to find a vision of something toward which to move, the progress of humanity for the moment ceases in stagnation. When from those who must lead there comes no longer the clear note of the trumpet (because the general staff has no plan of battle), the army rapidly becomes a bedlam.

"All that may be true," said I in the days of my groping, "but what can I do about it? I take it that what is needed is an original trumpet blast, not merely a gramophonic echo of a tucket that once was. I cannot sound such a new call. It is quite true that I do not know the way, that I have no avowed or even implicit objective. In my endeavor to arrive at one I have tried science, only to find

myself flat against a blank wall of determinism which makes all struggling silly. Moreover, I have so discovered the limitations of the senses and the brain as to realize perfectly well that science can explain nothing to me, or to anybody else, deeper than how things now behave, which does not really matter very much after all. I have also tried to explain life and find a goal in terms of humanitarianism. That will not do either. It may have sufficed a generation ago but it suffices no more. In the light of modern knowledge, to make a god out of the human race is sheer folly. People are not great deities. They are not even gods with feet of clay. They are mostly driven sheep, silly even though lovable, not a whit more noble than I am myself. I cannot be a sentimentalist. I have tried pure logic, and its necessary paradoxes lead me to despair. Infinity and space, realism and idealism, free will and determinism; each problem of philosophy leads me only to an insoluble puzzle. The business of philosophy seems to be to ask questions, not to answer any. Whither, then, am I to turn? There ought to be a way out, whereby I might attain to purpose, find myself released for leadership; but apparently there is none. Here I am—stuck, static, bored."

And when men more experienced than I sought

to tell me that religion always has been and still is the way out, then I was much more bored than ever. "No," I said,—and a sad smile used to creep over my face,—"I have tried religion too, and have found that there is nothing in it."

If I really *had* experimented with religion, there would have been nothing more to be said; but with all solemnity it needs to be stated that at that time I had not tried, nor have more than a very few of the despairing intellectuals whom I meet nowadays ever tried, religion. Most of them have, as I once had, only the vaguest and most sentimental ideas about what religion is, and almost no knowledge gained from experimentation with its practices. They have, as I once had, all sorts of incidental notions about religion, queer prejudices concerning it. Next to none of them seems to suspect, as at that time I did not suspect, that through all the ages religion has mattered simply because *it is an attempt to get into contact with superhuman, supermaterial, superrational, ultimate Reality, otherwise beyond man's comprehension, in terms of personality.*

Personality is the highest developed and most complex thing about which man has knowledge. Every man is himself a person. He is more than a bundle of emotions, more than a reason, more than a blind will. He is all these rolled into one, plus something

more. He feels, he thinks, he wills, he is. Now, ultimate Reality cannot be less than man. It cannot therefore be less than personal. It may be more than personal. About that one can say nothing. Whatever else ultimate Reality may be, it must at least be ultimate personality. It must, in short, be God. Through long ages of experimentation with the problem of life, man never has been able to find ultimate Reality with the mind alone. But he need not for that reason despair, because he has discovered that he can, if he wishes, find out a good deal about ultimate Reality in terms of personal contact. Man can search with all he is for all there is of God. This personal search for Reality is religion, a seeking which has always proved sufficient to lift man out of his quandary and to set him on the pathway of adventurous search. For modern man, too—left, as he is by science, without a goal; by exploded humanitarianism, without a hero; by logic, in an *impasse*—religion is still the only way out. In personal apprehension of that which we cannot intellectually comprehend is still the only true romance. The intellectual, who seems usually never even to have heard of religion on those terms, might well try religion on those terms; it is positively his last hope.

The adventure of religion will take all of him,

though, and not only his mind. Personality is more than merely mental. Simply pondering about God will get nowhere. Therein lies the fatal defect of most modern religion, particularly contemporary Protestant religion. No one can find contact even with another *human* person merely by arguing about him, writing about him, preaching and listening to speculative lectures about him. No friendship can long stand such maltreatment. In our human friendships the thinking part does not even come first in point of time. One likes one's friends, one loves one's wife, before one presumes to ask why. The primary element is the affectional element. First, to some degree at least, one "worships" one's friend; then, afterwards, it may be that one a little understands that friend. The function of reason is not to discover anything, but only to interpret that which one has otherwise discovered. When there has once been a perception of another person, the intellect may and must be used to find out what it is in that person which has compelled affection. Nor may the friendship stop there, if it is really to matter. Eventually there must be a willing within oneself of those qualities in one's friend which have been perceived and then partially understood. When into the friendship has gone affection, intellect, and will, then and then only is the friendship vital.

The same thing applies to that adventure in personality which is known as Christianity. My perception of that analogy was the second great step in the way out of my muddle.[1]

Christianity offers Jesus as ultimate personality in human terms. With exact dogmatic definition of who and what Jesus is, this chapter is not concerned —not because it is unimportant to define such things, but because the practical reality back of the definition is more immediately important than any definition. Jesus is, at least, a vastly more perfect person than we are. All the elements of successful personality which we imperfectly possess, he possesses in greater degree. Nineteen centuries of human experiment proclaim that that greater perfection is absolute perfection. Be that as it may, it may be admitted by anyone that the path toward greater apprehension of him, not as a dead example but as a living being, is a possible path toward greater apprehension of reality.

If the approach to Jesus begins with reason alone, it is apt to get nowhere. The way toward him is the way toward any other person. One first approaches him with the heart, giving at his altar in prayer, and in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood, honor, worship, beauty, silence—and, not too much, talk.

[1] The first great step was the recognition of the paradox described in the preceding chapter.

The basis of religion is adoration, not argument; devotion rather than discussion.

One must love before one can understand. There exists no religion until one has begun to love God. Once this loving has begun, on the basis of what love reveals one may, and indeed if honest must, begin intellectually to examine, seeking with the mind to discover what he is who is beloved. All the reason may work freely upon this new data, which has been discovered chiefly by the heart. Finally, if the whole process is to mean anything vital, there follows the willing of that which has been found in him. This complete process, and no less, is what the saints and seers and struggling seekers of every generation have meant by religion. Through it they have discovered something of that which is beyond the senses, something of what constitutes human destiny.

Religion begins with the heart and ends with the will. The function of the reason is to bridge the gap between the two. If only this could be understood by those who now sit most dolefully, even wistfully, in the seats of the scornful, there might be less of a somewhat infantile utterance to hear and read. There might, perhaps, be less despair. There might, it may be, shine one little ray of hope. There might sound in the distance a startling bugle, summoning mankind to sanity and glad adventure.

VI

The Humanizing of God

In which there is discovered a creed which is based upon agnosticism

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WHATEVER may be other characteristics of the religion of the future, this at least will be true of it: it will not deny the necessity of agnosticism. It will be beyond agnosticism, not below it, in mental maturity. It will not only admit but proclaim the fact that, even with much searching, man is unable to find out God. It will recognize that science must ever be nescient in its approach to Reality. It will realize well enough that the business of philosophy is to ask questions, not to answer them. In consequence, this religion of the future will be based upon neither science nor philosophy. How can it be, when about ultimates neither of them in any proper sense has ever had, possesses now, or in the nature of things can in the future discover, any competent information? How can either of them throw much essential light upon a Reality which, whatever else it is, is certainly superpersonal—when science deals

and must deal with facts all of them less complex than personality, and when philosophy deals and must deal merely with those ideas which personalities themselves create by thinking. No, about man and his scientific knowledge and his philosophical systems, the religion of the future is going to be properly sceptical; is sure to maintain a decent sense of humor.

What is man that he should expect everything to be within his rational cognition? Outside my roof tonight are the wintry stars. People cannot see them well in the city, where lesser lights obscure the mightier ones. That is one of a great many reasons why schools and colleges should be located in the country. It is only there that man appears in true perspective. It is there alone that one knows silences, and space. There is nowhere else that men may contemplate vastness without fear. David knew nights like this one. On one he wrote the Psalm, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him? Man is like smoke, like vapour, a thing of naught."

If David felt that, what ought we to feel, we who know the cosmos to be something vastly greater than he ever suspected? Possibly, as the Relativists maintain, space is not infinite—although it still is puzzling to know what these newer persons do with

the old question of what lies beyond their cosmic limits; but, infinite or not, space is sufficiently vast to engender human humility. Who are we that we should hope to comprehend and dissect the sentient Reality immanent within these unthinkable immensities? We cannot even begin to comprehend the immensities themselves. What are we anyway? In this infinite, or otherwise sufficiently vast universe, there is a little star which we call the Sun. It is not of any great magnitude. People on the North Star, they tell me, if equipped with telescopes as big as we have on earth, might not even know that the Sun existed, so small is it in the heavens, so faint is that light which seems to us so blazing bright. Around this luminary, by no means great, go a few planets, and this earth of ours is not the largest even of these. On this tiny bit of star dust, whirling around this star of insignificant magnitude, are we human beings, each so small as to be unnoticeable to an aviator a mile or more in the air. And shall we think that with our tiny brains we can unravel the mysteries of Him who made the whole vast cosmos? He who Causes to Be must smile in great pity when He hears men talking about some day finding out, of their own selves, the secrets of matter, and of life, and of death, and of Him.

That is as far as the agnostic may be able to go;

but he does go at least that far. He is sure to resent, rightly, having anyone tell him that that agnosticism of his is either unintelligent or wicked. To his position he has come, along a hard road, driven by interior honesty and inexorable necessity. Tell him he is a fool, and he knows that you are the fool. It is indeed a fortunate thing that Christianity, when in the hands of anyone who knows even a little of that Faith as it has been through the ages, does not call the agnostic a fool at all, but rather a wise man. Christians can say to him: "*You* can understand what this religion of ours is all about. You have come to the end of your own power of grasping hold of Truth. The Incarnation and what it manifests of God is the answer to your acknowledged inability. You cannot find God. May it not be that God may love enough to come Himself and find you? If there is no end to natural religion but a query, may there not be a God self-revealed, to give the answer to the otherwise insoluble riddle?"

If the agnostic is honest with himself, he is apt to be willing to admit that at least he wishes for such an answer. His is not only the statement, "I do not know if there be a God," but also the prayer, "O God, if there be a God, would that I might know Thee." An agnostic is like other men. He has no peace, and can have none, until he is at one with

Reality, and knows that oneness. He may, it is true, loudly protest to the contrary. He may even assert that it is wonderful to abandon primary problems and to live wholly in the realm of observable and secondary truth. Who is fooled by all that? Not I, for one. I have been in his shoes, and have whistled, too, with sad heart, to keep up my courage. I have known too many others in like case. I am not speaking, let it be remembered, of the hedonist, of the man or woman who stifles thought with meat and drink and lust for things, seeking to substitute such paltry trash for God. Such persons may call themselves agnostics, but that does not make them kin of the real agnostics, those who have by thinking sought to know, and have come to the end of thinking. Swine may be content, but agnostics are still possessed by the divine hunger, the undeniable thirst. They long, as do all men who have not turned backward toward the beasts, for that peace which the world cannot give, for that strength which comes of trust in certainties. They would not for all the world go back from their agnosticism, but they wish that there were a way to go forward from that agnosticism.

To me there came, and to many another in that position there has come, the thought: "Is Christ the answer? Is he the way out, the truth revealed, life's

secret brought to me? I am open-minded enough not to be wholly sure. I am an agnostic. I do not know. It may be that this Reality, of whose essential properties I know nothing, may have had it in His cosmic purpose to create beings who can grasp, but only in personal terms, things beyond the wit of brutes to apprehend. It may be that I have ways of knowing beyond reason, ways which may be developed without any denial of the validity of reason. It may be that God can reveal His else unknowable self in humanity like my own, can show forth personally in terms of space and time that which is beyond all space and time. Who am I to dogmatize about such matters, to utter categorical denials? I am *truly* agnostic. Here out of the past comes a faith in Jesus Christ as God incarnate, and with that faith and from it a certain conviction about Reality and about life and its meaning. This comes to me on the testimony of men whom I cannot help regarding as at least my intellectual equals, backed by that of an overwhelming company of more common folk whose reactions about ultimates only an unspeakable snob can with utter scorn ignore. *What if this thing be true?* At least I will inquire what is the dominant principle, the heart and center of this ancient religion."

Because I myself have been in precisely that posi-

tion, it may perhaps be permitted me to attempt to answer that question; to state this Faith of the centuries once again, for the possible information of discontented agnostics.

Let two things be remembered. First, I shall not argue about the Christian faith. I shall not seek to find for it scientific proof, or to bolster it with philosophic theory. It has no scientific proof. It is not philosophically demonstrable. It has value only as it supplements science and philosophy with that which neither of them can provide. While this is true, it is also true that a Christian need not deny in the least what science has shown or may show to be true, or minimize the validity of logic in the slightest degree. Christianity is a plus to science and philosophy. Take it or leave it; but in either case do not get it mixed up with things extrinsic to it. And, secondly, if there be among the readers of this book any *contented* agnostic, or any atheist with a closed mind who calls himself by the noble name of agnostic, let him cease reading here, lest he be unutterably bored. What I have to say is to *agnostics,* honest and humble ones, who are desirous of bettering their acknowledgedly tentative and unsatisfactory state of mind and soul.

First, let it be repeated, we agnostics are justified in saying that it is impossible for us, hampered as

we are here on earth, to escape from human limitations and to know the unlimited God. To know God is impossible, unless God translates Himself into terms that we mere human beings can understand. That is in very truth, say the millions of Christians of the nineteen centuries, what God did. God has shown to us Himself in terms that we can comprehend. He came from the unlimited, and lived among us all as man. He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath . . . given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth." [1]

Let us understand this thing. It is of primary importance to anyone who wishes to know our religion and what it may reveal of Reality. Let us consider a parable. The blazing light of the sun shines down. I cannot look at it for a single instant. Its light is too strong for my eyes. I take a smoked glass and hold it up. I can now look upon the sun's light, because it has been translated into terms my eyes can grasp. Take another parable.

[1] Philippians 2:7—10.

Over a wire comes a mighty electric current. I cannot use it. It is too powerful for my motor. It would melt the thing, ruin it. I shunt the current off into a resistance box and transform it to a voltage which is usable. My motor is no longer destroyed but empowered. Think of another and a still better parable. There comes to me a little child who says, "Please explain how locomotive engines make trains go." How do I do it? Do I talk to the child in the terms of a mature knowledge of mechanics? If I do, the child will never understand. No, I must for the moment put myself on the child's own level, and give my explanation in terms of the child's own meager experience. My explanation will not be adequate, but it will be as adequate as possible.

Jesus Christ is the glass through which we see God. He is the resistance box through which the eternal forces pass that they may touch and not consume us. God said, "Behold these men on the earth. They are but children. I wish them to know me and love me. They cannot understand unless I explain to them the infinite in terms of their own experience. In the ages to come they shall see me face to face, but not now. They are but children. I shall reveal myself as one of them. I shall take

their flesh upon me, limit myself as they are limited, and let them learn to know and love me so."

"Impossible," you say. "He could not leave Heaven vacant." Ultimate Reality can hardly be regarded as having geographical limitations. It is not necessary to suppose that because Reality walked the earth as man He was not also in other modes at that same instant present everywhere. He may, too, have become incarnate for a million worlds besides this, if men be on them. Puzzle not your head trying to confine, limit, and constrain the Eternal. As an agnostic, you know the folly of such attempt at definition. Look at that which may possibly be before you, Jesus God-made-man. He is presented to you as no mere man, no mere prophet, no mere teacher. Jesus is our God.

Would you know Reality in terms of babyhood? Go to Bethlehem's stable. Would you see Reality as a child? The temple and the home of Nazareth. As a young man setting out upon his labors? The baptism at the Jordan. As a workingman? The carpenter shop. As a friend? Bethany. As a teacher? The mount. As a man tempted of flesh and devil? The wilderness. As one in sorrow? The weeping over Jerusalem. As one in bitter loneliness? Gethsemane. As one in pain and death's dark agonies? The cross. Jesus is offered to you

as God, the only God we human beings can possibly understand. Therefore it is that when we Christians pray we finish the prayer with the words "through Jesus Christ." That is the only way we can see and touch our God—through Jesus Christ.

Men rarely come to know all at once that Jesus is God. It is usually a gradual process.

The first step is to perceive in Jesus a good, true, honest, noble, simple man; to admire his single-heartedness in the midst of a world of fuss and foolishness; to covet that strength of his wherewith he persisted in a plan regardless of threats and even of martyrdom; to commend his charity toward others, his refusal to scold such sinners as the grafter Zacchæus, the fallen Magdalene, or even those who crucified him; to say, "This Galilean carpenter is much beyond any man I know in real achievement of human character."

There are many people whose Christianity goes just about that far, and no farther. That, however, is only the beginning.

The next step is to set oneself to the task of becoming like Jesus, as far as one can, to seek to imitate him, to work hard to follow his example. Most people never honestly try that. We abstractly recognize that he is a noble fellow; but we get so busy making money, or seeking prestige and honor

in the world, or chasing pleasure of one sort or another, or cultivating our minds, or developing ourselves, or admiring ourselves, or something or other else, that we really try little to live like him. And because this is so, to most people the Christian religion is of very little real importance. Jesus says of many of us, of all of us a good part of the time, the same thing, with the same sorrow, which he said of many in the long ago—"This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed," [2] and so he could not heal them.

But if we have followed after Jesus, honestly for awhile, even though imperfectly, although we may have started to do so merely because we thought he was an admirable man, he gradually reveals his true self, more and more. They who do the deeds of the Gospel shall know the truth of the Gospel. Some day it flashes over us that the saints of all the ages have not been fools, and that the Christian Church in her creeds has not been uttering the arrant nonsense that many clever people say she has; that this Jesus is really God Almighty come among us men; that he is alive forevermore; that in very truth he does reveal God in all His power and friendship to us mortals; that when we pray to him,

[2] Matthew 13:15.

God hears; that to go to Communion is to touch God; that to hear Jesus' words is to hear God speak; and that to walk the streets of earth with him is to tread the courts of Heaven.

That is what "getting converted" really means. To get converted is not to stand up and say, "I accept Jesus as my Savior," without knowing what those words really mean; it is not to hit a trail and shake some fiery evangelist by the hand; it is not merely to say, "I wish to turn over a new leaf and be a more decent sort from now on." It is far, far more than that. It is to awake to the amazing realization that Reality is not far off, unknown and unknowable; that Jesus is not some vaguely recognized abstraction which may be acknowledged and then put out of one's mind, like gravitation and the ether: but that God is Jesus, walking still among us men, hearing us pray, blessing us in sacraments, our compassionate friend, touched with every feeling of our infirmities, but at the same time God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God.

Truly blessed are the eyes which see the things which Christians see, for we have found Reality. No more can we be utterly lonesome for, though all men may have left us, Jesus walks with us, and he is God. No more can we despair, even though all be black around us. Beside us in the dark, he

stands. We talk to him, and he hears. It is he who touches us in bread and wine at the altar. His Holy Presence ennobles our offices, our shops, our kitchens and our schoolrooms. He eats at our tables and is known in the breaking of bread. We wake in the night, and find him near. Wars and confusions may overtake us, nation destroy nation, and blood flow out like water; cathedrals and civilizations may crash about our heads before those guns which human science, minus God, has made possible; but Jesus moves among us, assuring us that truth and justice and brotherhood and mercy and peace shall not perish from the earth. Sickness or age may weaken our physical frames; but as the body writhes and gasps and shudders at the pain, Jesus still shines in our souls undimmed. Death comes, the great bogie of all the ages since man was, and crashes over us; but with him in the passing forth we fear no ill.

Blessed are the eyes which see the things which we see, for truly many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which we see and have not seen them, and to hear the things which we hear and have not heard them. We do not deserve this friendship with God. All that we can do, in service to Him and to our fellow men, can never repay God's love "who for us men and for our salvation came

down from heaven and took flesh by the Holy Spirit, of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." [3]

There is some one who reads these words and who says: "I wish I could feel that. I wish I could believe it. I wish I might thus know God. Jesus does not mean that to me. Hymns of adoration addressed to him sound forced in my ears. Pageantry of worship offered to him seems extravagant, bizarre, unreal. To me he is not God. Understand me. I do not deny what you have written. I know that it is this very belief you speak of which has made the happy saints, the noble martyrs, the whole blessed company. But I, I am unfortunate. Possibly I am lacking in some religious sensitiveness. I have never once felt Jesus thrilling me with his Deity."

Neither did even his twelve chosen ones for a long time know him so. In all the ages, many of Jesus' greatest followers have been found of him and have found him only after years of searching. If ever you are to find him, though, two things are necessary. One is that you must really from your heart show Jesus that you are trying to imitate him, seeking to become like him in humility, in simplicity of life, in kindliness, in unselfishness, in regardlessness of the subtle lures of luxury and ease and pride.

[3] The Nicene Creed.

That is the first thing. You must be attempting honestly to do the deeds of him if you are ever to know the love of him. And second, you must never think that you have explored the depths of Christianity until you have found him as your God. Do not be satisfied with any pale shadow, any sugary sentimentalizing, any philosophical explaining away, any watered-down substitute for the comradeship of Christ. If you remember these two things,—if you imitate him as best you may, and if you keep seeking him in the hope that haply you may find him,—you will find him. Often the finding of him comes in days of youth, and even of childhood. Happy are they who meet him so. It may come in the midst of your busiest years; when some great sorrow bursts over you, or some great pain. It may be not until you are old and gray and weak, and those years have come wherein you say, "I have no pleasure in them." The vision may come so slowly and gradually that you hardly know when or how it came; or it may break over you with a blinding flash as it did over Saul on the road to Damascus. How, or when, I know not. I do know that the time will come, and you will find him, and will cry, with Thomas the beloved doubter, "My Lord and my God!" Then you will know that whereof we speak who have

seen him. Blessed are the eyes which see Jesus, who is "the image of the Invisible God."

But how shall you know if such things be true? The only possible answer is, "Try it and find out." That would seem sanity. Nor is the use of the will to believe in realms spiritual one whit more self-hypnosis, than the exercise of the will to believe in realms scientific. No man ever discovered anything without some volition. And no man ever yet learned anything at all if he had a definite will *not* to believe it *possibly* true. In no sense is a venture of faith a surrender of integrity. Maybe it *is* true—this gigantic happiness, the Christian's heart-moving certainty that God so loved the world. Maybe agnosticism is *not* the end, but rather the necessary beginning.

VII

Mysticism versus Magic

The Pilgrim seeks to understand an age-old technique

In the next three chapters it may be well to consider the three great techniques of Christianity, whereby the consciousness of the Incarnate God is cultivated in men and women, that they may live their lives in the honesty of Christ and with the aid of His compassion. Those techniques are: Prayer, Sacraments, and Worship.

We can say little from information about those first men who, tens of thousands of years ago, were the progenitors of the present human race. Despite the fact that anthropologists are forever talking about them, there seem to be only those things certain which one might expect of men, as distinct from and superior to the lower animals. They were scientists enough to have invented rude tools; they were artists enough to draw pictures on their caves; and they had, and show it in their small remains, a sense of unseen Reality—they were mys-

tics. A mystic is a man who is conscious of the existence of a Reality which he cannot demonstrate, of which he has knowledge by a process of direct intuition deeper than and distinct from reason. All sane men are mystics. Primitive men were mystics. There was for our early forefather a perception of a Something as real as himself, as real as the world which his senses revealed to him, to be approached with the same reactions as were inspired by other persons external to himself—with awe, fear, obedience, rebellion, loyalty, hate, or love. From then until now that sense of the unseen Reality has been abiding, and gripping the lives of men and women. Only very occasionally, in times of rather precious overcultivation, have many people come so serenely to trust in themselves that they doubt the gods. The Greeks did that, but it did not last long. Modern people tend to do it, but it will not last long. The realistic common sense of the ordinary man is too strong to permit his denying what patently is a part of human experience, merely for the sake of intellectual pride. Indeed, in the periods of recovery from such blindness, times like ours, preliminary eras when amid the clamor of materialism are being born the great ages of religion, it is the extraordinary men, the men most wise in contemporary love, who first recover from that pride.

Today, if you wish to find the mystics, the safest place to look is among the leaders in the laboratories. Not that you will find there those moony souls who talk about "the religion of science" or "the naturalizing of the supernatural." Those are phrases confined to demi-educated ecclesiastics. *There is no religion in science.* Scientists know that. They insist upon it. But there is religion in men, which is why science can never adequately explain men. Most of the greater scientists know that quite well. Because they know it, they tend, to a degree startling to scientific laymen, to be mystics. They will be as hard as nails in their laboratories, and poets at home. It is true also that they have, for the most part, a strong respect for religion, provided it lets their science alone and minds its real and highly important business, which is to lead men in that which is beyond all science, the commerce of Imponderable Reality with the searching souls of men. One meets very few great scientists who are fooled, for instance, by such preposterosity as behaviorism, that "explanation" of thought which says that it is nothing but chemical and mechanical reactions. That seems to most of them to be science trying to play the fool in metaphysics. They perceive that life is indeed the paradox of which we spoke some chapters back. Not that they are churchmen, for

the most part. The reason that they are not is because it is hard for them to find churches nowadays which are content to follow the mystical way without apology. They are like the eminent physiologist who, at a dinner in New York last winter, said: "I am tired of fundamentalists, who believe that we scientists know nothing; and more tired of modernists, who think that we scientists know everything. Why do the churches bother about *us* so much? It is in what *they* know, or ought to know, that I am interested. They are the custodians of an ages-old human experience, the experience of what to scientists is forever unknowable. Why do they not speak up and reveal what the race has discovered?"

Religion, which is the real business of churches, and of the priests and prophets thereof, has to do with That which is perceived, though not seen, within the heart of things, beyond things, before them, behind them. Religion has to do with God.

Men felt God long before they defined Him or described Him—a strange Reality deeper than the senses. The Pacific Islanders called it *Mana.* It is foolish to say, as did Reginald Heber in the hymn, that "the heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone." He does not. He never did. He bows down to the mysterious Something, for him

incarnate in the wood and stone. I have felt It, bodied in the tiny leaves upon a springtime tree. You may have felt It, incarnate in the sea. The Parsees felt It, locate in the blazing sun. You have felt It, when love has burned clear, far beyond passion. I have felt It, as I looked upon the face of my first-born son. Men like Peter and John felt It, and women like Our Lady—and the Magdalene—in the look and voice and touch of Jesus Christ. Christians have felt It and adored—it may be that you have, I know that I have—pulsingly real in the Most Holy Sacrament. And as men came to know It better, very early, they discovered that it was *He* and not merely It. It knew and loved and comforted and strengthened and led and was stern and was kind; best of all It understood: and an It which did things like that was a personal It; it was He. They gave It a name, and they loved and were loved. And that mutual love was, and still is, Religion.

All the while they could not touch or taste or handle or dissect Him; they could only vaguely, and in human symbols, describe Him; they could not with any mathematical degree of certainty understand Him. They did, however, reach out after Him, and dread Him, and love Him; and so they came to know Him after all, with a knowledge

quite different from that with which they knew that fire burns or that snakes bite or that salt tastes good on the tongue, with a knowledge more certain in reality even than such knowledges as these. "Nearer is He than breathing; closer than hands or feet." Finally came Lord Jesus, and men and women saw revealed, in perfect manhood's guise, that Reality after which they had been groping. Then Jesus disappeared from physical sight, and was again only to be found by the mystic way. But now it was clear to Christians what sort of Being it is who lies hidden at the end of the mystic way. That which Jesus was and is, that God was and is. Still men search, and gropingly lay hold on God. Still some are seeking they know not what. Still men hunt, by various paths, for Him who is beyond all thought. The only claim our Christianity has for superiority over other religions is that it makes the mystic way more plain, more human, more simple; in our religion Jesus is himself the Way.

But the whole long religious development, from the beginning until now, has been vastly complicated by an almost insane selfishness which lies imbedded in human nature. Whether one believes in the Fall of Man—as I happen to do, though in a sense not of time or space—or however one explains it, there is in every man both the longing to

lose himself in all that is greater than himself and also the desire to make himself the center of that all and bend it to his human dominance. The giving in to that latter longing is what religion calls Sin. Sin is an ecclesiastical name for self-centeredness, for the notion that all that is, is one's oyster.

We see this human duality not merely in religion but in all that men and women do. In science there are those who seek to unlock the physical universe for the sake of truth; but there are also those who seek to unlock the physical universe that they may themselves personally exploit both it and their fellow men. The one sort of science is noble; the other is sordid. There are artists, too, of both kinds. One man paints because, by putting onto canvas what he has seen and dreamed, he serves beauty and is one with it. Another paints because he is a conceited ass and loves applause. Beauty in his eyes exists that he may use it for his own small purposes. The former, men love; the latter, they properly desire to kick downstairs. In respect to the human activity known as mysticism—contact with the personally apprehensible Unseen—there is and ever has been this same division. There are those who seek after God that they may lose themselves in Him and for Him, and in consequence find falling from them the fetters of self-consciousness and conceit. *The*

attempt to do that is Religion. But there are those who seek after God with the notion in their heads that they can manipulate Him, coerce Him into getting for them things that they can not get for themselves, or into warding off from them the necessary results of their own folly; into playing tricks for them. *That sort of thing is not religion at all. That is Magic, religion's bastard brother.*

Of course, magic is a howling absurdity. All self-centeredness is, for that matter. The great universe does not revolve around you or me. It does not revolve around the human race, or the planet upon which that race is domiciled. It does not even revolve around that vast unified variety which the five senses, aided by all instruments and interpreted by reason, has revealed or may reveal to us. All that is comes from, goes toward, is permeated by, this Being who is ever eluding yet constantly enriching us. The cosmos revolves around God. Who am I that I should, by any act of hocus-pocus, make the Eternal dance to my piping? I may do His will and live, or defy that will and perish. He calls. I answer. Not the other way around. Yet, despite the absurdity of magic, men have practiced it—and still do. There are even Christians by the thousands who practice it. They perform rituals, say prayers, observe moral taboos, with the belief

that if they do these things God will get or do for them what they themselves desire. It is some such stupid nonsense as this which many of those who denounce mysticism suppose religion essentially is. What does the man of scorn usually know about the rigors and the rewards of the mystic way? All that he sees is some sniveling idiots who are trying to fool and coerce the good God into becoming their little handy-man. No wonder he remains a man of scorn. It needs to be plainly said, in language that the wayfaring man may read, that mysticism is a thing more sane than that. The center of religion is not in the will of the worshipers. Its center is in the volition of the Eternal. Prayer is a part of the age-old religious technique of the race, not a magical device.

What is Prayer? Even Christians do not always understand it. I have asked no end of them what they mean by it. It speaks distressingly of the bad pedagogy and consequent degeneracy of contemporary Christianity that most of the Protestants who have answered me—less of the Catholics and of the Jews—have told me that prayer is "asking God for something."

What a travesty of that which prayer has really meant to the race! Prayer is not a method of incantation, whereby one seeks to force God to do for

him what he cannot do for himself. Prayer is a method whereby we seek to give ourselves and our lives, with their duties and their problems, wholly into the hands of God, removing all our strivings from the path of His desire. In the Lord's Prayer, we ask for ourselves only sustenance for life—bread, and forgiveness, and guidance; and before we ask even that, we say: "Thy kingdom come." And that other Lord's prayer, which Jesus himself prayed, ran, "Father, only if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Not My will, but Thy will, be done." By prayer we give our volition to God; we do not seek to bend His will to ours. It is perfectly true that God does often give to us who pray unexplainable blessings, but not if that is what we are chiefly seeking. No sick man who prays for health with a desire to get well, whether or no God wills it, can by prayer be healed. No barren woman who prays for children with a feeling that she must have them, whether God designs them for her or has other purposes for her, can possibly be heard of Heaven. No one who prays for success, without a willingness to fail if that will help God's larger purposes, even knows what praying means. Therefore, we may truly say that the chief value of prayer is as a means of bending our weak, ignorant, willful human lives and desires to His eternal purposes. Its objective benefits, the

things which we may get, are purely incidental. When we do get them, it is because God perceives our willingness to do as He desires, and gives them as a reward for unpretended trust in Him.

God can so reward trust on our part, and He does do so. Does that seem incredible? Many a young collegian has asked me if I really thought that God, in answer to prayer, would violate His great laws for our personal advantage. Of course, God does no such thing. When Divine Omnipotence makes laws, they must be good enough laws to need no breaking. It is not necessary, however, that He should break His laws, in order that He may "answer prayer."

We must never forget that we human beings, limited as we are in intelligence, do not know and understand all the law of God. We know only a very small part of that law. That part which we do understand we call natural law. That part which we do not understand we call supernatural law. The boundary line between them is somewhat movable. Three hundred years ago the laws governing electricity were all unknown to us, and the manifestations of electricity were regarded by everyone as supernatural. When lightning struck, it was a mysterious and direct interposition of the hand of God. Then we learned some of the laws governing elec-

tricity. We know many of them now, although even yet no living man knows what electricity is. Its manifestation we now recognize as controlled by natural laws. That simply means that we now know something about them. At this present time certain laws governing thought transference are in the process of being incorporated into "natural law" from "supernatural law." God's law is one. To us it has two parts, that we know and that we do not know.

A miracle, so called, is not an impossibility at all. That miracles should be is the most scientific of statements. A so-called miracle is merely the putting by God, over against forces the laws governing whose operation we at least partially understand, certain other forces the laws governing whose operation we do not comprehend. I can, in a limited way, act similarly myself. Here is a book. Suppose I drop it out of my hand. It will drop down and hit the ground, by operation of the law of gravitation. But when it is halfway down I thrust out my hand and catch it. Have I broken the law of gravitation? Is it violated? Do the sun and the moon and the stars stop acting according to gravitation's law and fly into everlasting chaos? They do not. The old law of gravitation is still working. I have, however, interposed a force, my arm moved by my will, the law of which supersedes in this instance

the lower law of gravitation. Personality has overcome impersonal force. So is it in infinite degree with God. He has at His command innumerable laws the nature of which we do not comprehend, according to which His Supreme Personality can interfere with normal effects of lower laws, without destroying those lower laws in the least degree.

If one admits that God is, and that God loves us, then follows the inevitability of God doing often just this sort of thing. The trouble with people who do not believe in miracles is not that they are too logical or too scientific. Either they do not believe in God at all or else they believe that God does not care—that He is a cruel, ghastly, mechanistic monstrosity. The experience of millions of people and the inner promptings of our own hearts alike tell us that God does care. We can confidently believe Him, therefore, when He says, "Ye seek, and strive, and yet have not, because ye ask not." We may carry our lives to Him, our problems, our plans, our temptations, our sins and failures, our hopes and fears—and carry also to Him those whom we love —humbly desiring Him to deal with us as seems to Him best. He may not always do what we desire done, with our poor human wisdom to guide us in the asking; but always He will give us strength for any situation, and often He will do for us, seeing

our love and trust, things beyond our human understanding.

To pray, then, is consciously to offer our human wills to be conformed to that of Christ our God, that he may mold our lives according to His own desire. When a man prays much, in that attitude, he becomes of some use to his fellow men in this world, for his service is sanctified by character as he becomes calm, healthy-minded, serene, simple, kindly, sacrificing, and humble—a joy for his fellows to look upon, a benediction to the brethren.

It has been said by a number of holy men and women in former times that the only way to learn how to pray is to pray. That is, of course, quite true. Talking to God is like any other sort of conversation. Facility comes only with practice. That tongue-tied embarrassment which bothers most of us when we meet new people, especially in our younger and less experienced days, usually grows less only as we come to know those new people the better through having, perhaps stumblingly and stupidly, attempted to converse with them. There are many who, attempting to realize their comradeship with God in prayer, give up because they find it in the beginning difficult, and themselves self-conscious and embarrassed. They do not realize that most of those who have found the greatest joy and strength

in talking with God have started their praying in the same halting and difficult manner.

When, however, one tells the beginner in religion that he ought to pray, one should also give him at least a few hints about how to go about it.

First of all, it is well constantly to remember who the God is to whom the Christian is praying. Many people fail in their prayers because the deity with whom they attempt to converse is merely a vague abstraction in their minds. It is a simple matter of fact that no one can talk easily and naturally with any vague abstraction.

That is why, with many who do not understand Christianity, the prayers of childhood are more vivid than those of later years. It was so in my own case, as I well remember. When I was little I had a very definite idea of the God to whom I prayed. My mother told me that He was in heaven and that heaven was "up there." This I took literally, and domiciled my deity on the roof. There He lived. He was a little past middle age, with a benevolent and somewhat ruddy face, with silvering whiskers, wearing gold-rimmed spectacles. In other words He was to me a somewhat glorified copy of my paternal grandfather. To talk through the ceiling to such a Person was a vivid experience. Gradually this very definite object of devotion was, by

my education, dematerialized and delocalized. No other concept of deity of a human and comprehensible sort was introduced. God was a vague aura, a spiritual influence, a permeating benevolence. Consequently, although during this period I was confirmed and made my communions more or less regularly, my prayers were, when said at all, perfunctory and uninteresting. I can well understand how many people, going through the same experience, cease to pray at all. I did so myself.

Fortunately—at about this time—I ran across the notion of a practical comradeship with God made possible for man through His having come down to us on earth in terms of our humanity. The Incarnation, which previously had been merely an abstract and unimportant doctrine, was at length seen in its practical importance. I commenced to visualize Jesus when I talked to God. God was thus again for me localized, humanized—if you will, materialized—and prayer meant something once more.

"Through Jesus Christ Our Lord"—that that is the way to talk to God is evidenced by most of the prayers offered in our churches. Whether liturgical or extemporaneous, they usually end with these or equivalent words. A good many people seem to think that this means that Jesus takes prayers somewhere up to a God other than himself; that

they pass "through Jesus Christ" as a letter goes "through the post office." As a matter of Christianity, Jesus *is* God, Deity manifested. We see the Eternal "through him" just as, when confined within the walls of a room, we see the sunlit landscape outside "through the window." If, therefore, the Christian simply prays to Jesus Christ, with the human, compassionate, understanding Jesus as the visualized objective, he will find that his prayers immediately cease to be vague and without terminus.

The second suggestion that may be made to the one starting out in the praying life is that he avoid all books of prayers and so-called devotional manuals. Such volumes have their place in public or "common" prayer, where the desire is that a whole group of people shall talk together to Our Lord, and often they may be employed with profit by people well used to prayer. For most people, however, they are a hindrance and a nuisance in private talking with him. One needs no books to teach one how to talk to one's mother. One's sweetheart would be dumfounded if one began to make love out of a manuscript, even if the speeches therein contained were an hundred times more eloquent than one's own attempts. When one speaks to one's dear friends one must, it is well understood, speak simply and unaffectedly that which lies close to one's heart.

So it is in talking to God. God would rather hear a man's own honest, stumbling, even stupid speech than to listen to a recitation of some eloquent utterance made of old by St. Thomas à Kempis or St. Catherine. It is a safe thing to say that no one ever found much joy in praying until he began talking to God for himself.

A third thing that is necessary for successful prayer is that it should be properly balanced, and not over-inclined to mere petition. Some people never get down on their knees before God without searching their brains madly, saying, "What on earth shall I ask God for now?" If no prayer made primarily with the idea of getting something is ever answered, we ought always to be on our guard against this easy and suicidal lack of proportion in our speech with God.

In the days of my own very young manhood an old and wise priest, summing up, as I later found out, the experience of many of the saints, gave me the following advice:

"When you pray, my son, remember that what you are really doing is talking as a child to its father. You would not think much of a child who never spoke to its earthly parents except to say, 'Give me something.' If you were the parent of such a child you probably would give that child nothing, for

fear of making it more selfish. As a parent you would expect that occasionally the child might say 'Thank you' after you had benefited him. If he were a proper child he would wish to do so. If you had been forced to discipline or correct that child for its faults, it would rejoice your heart to have the child confess that it had been bad. It would make you know that the child recognized in you not a vindictive enemy but one who chastened because he loved. It would be a pleasure to you, and an evidence of rightness in the youngster, if occasionally he came asking not for himself but for his brothers and sisters. And you would be a queer parent not to find your greatest joy in his spontaneous coming to you and climbing up in your lap and throwing his arms around you, whispering in your ear, 'Dad, I love you a lot. You are a great dad.'

"Even so, my son, it is with God your father and you His child.

"When you talk with Him, start with the thought of Him rather than the thought of yourself. Tell Him how much you love Him, how great you recognize Him to be, how marvelous, how powerful, how loving, how true, how calm and serene. There are foolish people who say that to do this is to flatter God. Such critics never had children of their own. This sort of prayer is known as Adoration.

"Then, when you have thus contemplated Him, you may safely think about yourself. In the light of Him you will at once perceive your limitations, your silliness, your stupidity, your cowardice, your fretfulness, your mistakes, your pettiness, your ignorance, your sins. Tell them to God. Of course, He knows about them already, a great deal better than you do; but He wishes to see that you also recognize them and bewail them. Tell them all to Him, fully and frankly. This sort of prayer is called Confession.

"The next step, obviously, is to utter your gratitude to the adorable God for being so patient with undeserving you. Many blessings He has given to one who ill deserves them. There is your life itself, with its opportunity for growth of mind and spirit; your food and clothes and shelter; your friends who love or have loved you; all the good things of life; all the sorrows which have deepened and developed you; His own love in becoming human for you. There are no end of things to mention gratefully, even for those whom the world in its ignorance deems wholly unfortunate and abused. This part of prayer is named Thanksgiving.

"Having thus contemplated God adoringly, confessed your own insufficiency and ill-deserving, and

thanked Him from your heart, then turn your thinking to your brethren. There are many, many people you know who need to be brought in your compassion before Divine compassion; your worried husband; your house-bound and weary wife; your children unfolding day by day; your old mother and father; your sisters and brothers; the neighbor in sorrow and loneliness; your employees whose lives are constricted, or your employer harassed with the thought that there may be no contents for your next pay envelope; those seeking to save America from self-destruction; those trying to Christianize our pagan industrial processes—brethren innumerable to love and to remember before God. This praying has received the name of Intercession.

"And finally, if you have any time left, which probably you will not, it is permitted, here at the end of your praying, to ask God for something for yourself. Even here, however, you must be careful how you pray. We are bidden confidently to ask God for our daily bread; but we are nowhere bidden to beseech Him for French pastry. Luxury, abundance, God may in trust bestow upon some men, but no man has a right to ask for it as though it belonged to him. You are permitted rightly to request just enough of this world's goods, just enough also of immaterial happiness, to enable you to do

your work, day by day, like a man. Never should one ask the God who, Himself, gave all for us, to give an atom more than just one's 'daily bread.' This praying for oneself is called Petition."

I have written down these words as nearly as I can now recall them, because they are indeed the wisdom of many, many persons who have tried the way of prayer. No matter whether one has an hour to pray, or only a minute or two, one can always talk to God the better if he will remember that each true prayer has something in it of

Adoration
Confession
Thanksgiving
Intercession, and last and least of all,
Petition.

Finally, the suggestion may be made that prayer is intended to be a conversation. I once knew an old lady who used to sail in upon her friends and continue, from the moment she entered their house until she left it a half hour later, a constant stream of words. Her hosts occasionally got a word or two in edgewise, but it was always a difficult process. Almost invariably, when she left, she would say, "My dears, I am so glad I came. It has been such a lovely conversation." Of course, there had been

no conversation at all. There had been a monologue. Much prayer is of a similar sort. The praying person gets started and talks a great deal with no interruption, says "Amen," and goes about his business. Such an one cuts himself off from most of the joy and benefit of the mystical life. There should be quiet times, when one says nothing, but rather listens. There are many things that God wishes us to know, comforts that He wishes to give, guidances in perplexity, encouragements to new endeavor, frequent calmings for troubled souls; but how can they be given to those who never stop to hear? God spoke in olden times to men and women, spoke so vividly that they insisted they had heard His voice. He speaks to men and women equally today, if in their prayers they wait to know His will.

Mysticism and magic—they are opposites. It is an index of our current pathological mentality that many otherwise intelligent persons suppose them two names for the same thing.

VIII

The Touch of God

In which a universal sacramentalism is noted

Any religion worthy the name ought certainly to provide for its adherents a technique by which they may be brought vividly to feel that God is a present and sustaining force, external to them but friendly toward them. Prayer alone is hardly sufficient. Prayer is essentially an introspective thing. It is the attitude of a man toward God. It is not the answer of God to man. That answer must have its origin outside ourselves. It is, to be sure, a wonderfully helpful thing that the Christian does when he opens his heart in adoration, confession, thanksgiving, intercession, and petition, to Jesus Christ, the God-made-man; but it is not enough that man shall search for God. As was said in the earlier chapters of this book, that search is not in itself soul-satisfying. Only the answer of God, the giving of His whole comradeship, has within it satisfaction for the soul, peace for the mind, invigora-

tion for the whole being. As a matter of fact, because the Incarnate God of the Christian is a God more capable of intimate companionship than a disincarnate God can ever be, there is more need in Christianity than in any other religion for the presence of the deity to make itself known in answer to prayer.

The more people think of Jesus, the more they long to have him with them. Here is indeed a God who may matter to the sons of men. His ability to strengthen and encourage us comes from the very fact that life brought against him in his humanity all the burdens of evil, all the darts of sorrow, all the blows of disaster, all the resultant doubt—and he remained uncrushed. Even the blinding moment of death, which followed a soul-shaking rejection, he was able to face without flinching. Because he did all this, because he was tried as we are tried, he can reach out hands of helpfulness to us as we struggle with life, awed by its stern mystery. He is no God for cowards. Those who, at the first finding that life is a hard thing, seek to hide themselves either in luxury and amusement or in some cowardly philosophy which denies the existence of pain, or in a cynical surrender, cannot be his. He is for those who know through experience that life is not all beer and skittles. When we have awakened from

youth's daydreams, when we see life as the grim thing that it is, when we remember that here we have no continuing city, when we have learned that we can attain to only a small portion of our ambition, when pain and the beginnings of decay have made themselves known in our bodies, when sorrow comes upon us, when the burdens of ingratitude oppress—then we know our need of strength from outside ourselves and from beyond material things. We cannot of our own virtue go successfully through this queer existence which ends with apparent certainty in feebleness, disease, a panting breath or two, and the darkness. In times of realization we reach out, almost instinctively, toward God, with a longing to know that within the Eternal there is One who has faced our problems victoriously.

As a matter of fact, it is true even in the realm of human relationships that only those can help who have themselves endured. A mother is seized with the first pains of child-birth and is terrorized at that which is upon her. Beside her stands another woman who has herself borne children. Or a man sits by his boy's bedside, and sees the boy die. Around his drooping shoulder is the hand of one who says, "I know. I, too, have lost a son." Or a youth finds his great romance shattered. She whom he has loved with a love akin to worship

discards him for another man, older perhaps than he, more established in the world. All the cosmos is black, until some one can assure him from experience that broken hearts do mend. Or a statesman devotes his life to a great ideal, dreams of it, is broken in health for his devotion to it—an ideal which may bring peace to the world. Confidently he offers it to his fellows as his *magnum opus;* and is defeated at the polls. No man can stand a blow like that unless from out the past there come to him others who whisper, "We, too, have known the bitterness of rejection. We, too, have had the task of accepting humiliation with humility."

It is in some such way as these, only more fully, that Jesus Christ the Crucified can help us who have accepted him as God—if only we can find him, if only he can make himself known to us.

His life is a failure, as men judge such things. The crowds which followed him to the mountain, and listened to his word along the shore of Gennesaret, forsake him in the end. His chosen friends disappoint him, and quarrel for place about his table. They sleep in the garden, while he struggles toward courage. One of his own betrays him for a little money. Even his best friend denies him. What has become of that happy Galilean dream of a whole world following him into the millennium? Since

he is truly man, this is truly rejection to be truly endured. He is led out to die; billeted with a jeering title; spat upon; derided.

If only we could get to him, he surely would be able to give to us some reassurance. He felt that to be true. At the very outset of all that time of rejection, when in the upper room he poured out his heart in intercession for those who were all he had to depend upon for the carrying on of his religion in the ages yet to be, his one great desire was that they might have constantly that sense of his Presence through which he might encourage them. "Father," he said, "I will that they also, whom thou hast given unto me, be with me where I am." [1]

It has been such a vivid consciousness of the presence and comradeship of Jesus which has made the saints, which has distinguished the Christian life. The apostles, for instance, were not great geniuses. They were feeble men in utterance, nor were their writings remarkable as literary productions. But man took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. Their constant talk, the chief subject of their writing, was the power that lies in Jesus Christ. And in the days when all the apostles were gone, the same thing still remained true. Wherein lies

[1] John 17:24.

the power of St. Francis of Assisi or of St. Francis de Sales, or of John Wesley, or of Phillips Brooks, or of St. Thérèsa, or of Cardinal Newman—to mention a few widely differing types. They lived close to Jesus, consciously so, and men found in them a resultant sweetness and power and compassion and simplicity that was beyond the world. It is something of the peace, the serenity, the sureness, to be gained from Christ, which most men long for and which almost all men respect. They ask of the Church in every generation that it shall manifest something of these qualities in the lives of pastors and people. The world has little patience with a Church which presents them a spectacle of ambition and bustle and tumult and wordiness and worldliness. Whenever thinking men and women can find those who live consciously close to Jesus and reflect, even slightly, that which is in him, then and only then is there engendered real respect for Christianity. Whenever the church relies upon human methods and human organization for her advancement; when she substitutes anything as her purpose for the bringing of men and women and children face to face with Jesus; she fails.

But how is she to bring men face to face with Jesus? Where is this Jesus? The Christian believes that he is God and that therefore he is everywhere.

But that is not sufficient for most people. Possibly it is not sufficient for anybody, if only we knew the facts. It is difficult for us, limited in our human bodies as we are, to have realization of comradeship with a God who is everywhere, unlocalized, vague, intangible. It was because of this very difficulty that the Incarnation came to be. But now, nineteen hundred years, as we say, "after Christ," is God again intangible? Does he no longer incarnate Himself? Is he no longer able to do for us what He did for his followers in Palestine long ago? A considerable number of people have expressed to me something of this wistful longing for an Incarnate Christ. Probably most men feel it. No one has said it more clearly than a chief boatswain's mate in the navy, one night during the war. He said to me, as we talked of religion:

"Chaplain, I wish to God I had lived back there when Jesus was on earth. I try to pray to Jesus and he is not real, real as you are, as the fellows in the barracks are, as my mother and the girl at home are. Back there in Palestine he was like other folks are. I could have gone to him and knelt down before him and looked up at him, and seen his face, and heard his voice, and felt him reach out and touch me; and then I could have gone about my work and known how deeply he cared and how

much he, my friend, was helping. Chaplain, I feel that under those conditions I could have been a mighty decent sort of fellow. When this damned pull of sex got to dragging at me like it does, I should have kept decent. He would have understood and he would have helped. When I got sore and wished to boil over and cuss all men, he would have given me the stuff in me to keep cool. Chaplain, why did he ever go away?"

I told him that Jesus never had gone away.

"Yes," he said, "I know. You mean he is spiritually present. But that does not help enough. *I do not want to find him everywhere. I want to find him somewhere.*"

All Christianity during most of the centuries that have intervened since the year of Calvary, and by far the greater part of Christianity today, has a technique wherein and whereby men and women may meet Jesus *somewhere.* That Sacrament of the Altar which Christians call by various names—Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the Supper of the Lord, Holy Mass—is the somewhere where Jesus has made it possible for those who would be his to meet him, in that same simple, concrete, human fashion in which we meet all other of our friends.

Every friendship is a sacramental thing. Every relationship between human beings has its outward

sign and its inner meaning signified. When I shake hands with some one whom I know, the outer sign is the grip of material flesh. There is also a thing signified. Behind his hand is his invisible soul. Behind my hand is my invisible soul. It is only in some such thing as a material handclasp that those souls can make known to one another their abiding friendship. When two sweethearts kiss, there is a touch of lips on lips, a material contact. If it were not for that which lies behind the contact, a kiss would be the most absurd of things. But the thing signified through her lips is the invisible soul of her that loves him; and the thing signified through his lips is the unseen soul of him that loves her. That makes the kiss a sacrament. In marriage, which is the most basic of all human institutions, the mating is physical; but the physical marriage may be the sign and seal of a great spiritual comradeship. The reason why so many marriages fail is because the sign is sometimes there without the thing signified. All comradeship of person with person in this world is sacramental.

Always there is the physical touch to make the spiritual touch perceptible. From the day of a man's conception until the day that he dies he never meets another person, never feels another soul, save sacramentally. No disembodied spirit ever touches him,

at least to his knowledge. Even spiritualists, in their endeavors to communicate with the unknown world, never even think of doing it except through some sort of materialization—a tipping table, a smokelike ghost, a ouija board, or some such thing. So universal is the sacramental law of friendship that even where the material is recognized as a nuisance, it is regarded as a necessary nuisance. Sacramentalism in personal relationships is as integral a part of the law of human existence as birth or death or breathing.

I am quite sure that the trouble with the religion of a great many people, the reason why men and women do not feel the help of Christ as vividly as did the apostles or the later saints, is that, while we all today gladly and inevitably acknowledge the necessity of sacramentalism in our other personal relationships, we seem to think that it ought not to characterize our contacts with the Eternal Person. We get in touch with every other spirit through physical media, and think that there is involved thereby no disparagement of the beauty or purity of such relationships; but we insist, for a reason which I confess I do not know and cannot ascertain, that when we get in touch with God it must be done in some unnatural, inhuman, unsacramental fashion. If to be religious means to people that they must

try to go against nature, no wonder they find religion impossibly difficult.

The Holy Communion is Christ, embodied to meet his friends humanly, in conformity with the laws of nature. Christ instituted this Sacrament. It was the only ritual act that he ever did institute. Through the centuries it has been the normal medium of contact between the Christian and his Lord. At the hands of him who is celebrating the Feast, Christ takes the bread and says, "This is my body"; He takes the wine and says, "This is my blood."

What does he mean by that? What do Christians believe that he means by that? One thing at least should be recognized. Since Christians are not children, that which is meant is not something cannibalistic. Rather it is meant that Jesus uses now that bread of wheat, as once he used a physical integument like ours, as his Body, as the means of expression of himself, whereby he may touch us, who through *our* bodies express to him our inner need. We, kneeling before him, wishing for him, imploring his strength, seeking his courage, *feel* him touch us. Then we get up from our knees, and go out from our altars to face our lives. Those lives are always hard and puzzling. Frequently they are shot through with cruelty to be endured, or pain to be faced, or sorrow to be borne. In them

lurks the temptation which so often has made wreck of us, the passion which stains, the folly which dims our youth. Those lives are quite unchanged; but there is now a difference. We know that we do not have to face them all alone. Our God has touched us.

For sixteen hundred years the church furnished to her people, as the one greatest help for life, this vital contact with Jesus Christ, in the Sacrament of the Altar. In those centuries most of the preaching and teaching was for the purpose of telling men how they might find Jesus in Communion—Jesus for them incarnate sacramentally. It is one of the greatest tragedies in history that, when the ancient church had become corrupt and reformation was a necessity, in the process of cleansing it from the many evils which marred it, the reformers lost the sense of the power of the Sacrament. Perhaps this was due to the fact that those Reformation leaders, heady with the Renaissance revival of learning, thought that right thinking was more important than it is. Right thinking is important, but it is not enough for the sustenance of the soul of man. Even the Lutheran Church and the Episcopal Church, which theoretically refused to throw overboard, as the Calvinists did, the Sacramental discipline, have laid so little emphasis upon it that there

are tens of thousands of their members to whom the Sacrament is only a thing incidental and relatively unimportant. It is highly significant that in every Communion in Christendom today, Protestant as well as Catholic, the force and power and vigor are largely concentrated in that group which is stressing sacramentalism. There is reason for this, a reason that is innate in human nature. *It is impossible for me at least to see how any quite awake observer of the religious life of the moment can fail to see the absolute necessity of the revival of sacramentalism if Christianity is to survive and again greatly to influence the lives of men.*

But how, somebody asks, can Jesus, if indeed he be God, dwell especially in any one spot? If he be God, he is everywhere. This is quite true. The God-made-man is everywhere; and yet he is in particular within his Sacrament. This is surely not difficult to understand. A parable may make it plain. On a sunlit day I walk abroad. All about me is the sunshine, so all-present that I am used to it and fail to notice it. I move in inward gloom, oblivious to the light. Some one sees to it that a burning glass is focused on my hand. I feel the heat. I look down and see a shining spot of brilliancy. Then I remember that there is a sun. My eyes are open and I see the sunshine everywhere.

I have recognized the light and heat about me because for the moment it has in concentration touched me. The Sacrament is the burning-glass of God. When at His altar I have vividly realized His Presence, I more easily remember how that Presence is ever about me, how constant beneath me are the everlasting arms, how all-embracing is His love, how vital is His life-giving compassion.

IX

The Art of Worship

Some suggestions are given, with a little argument, on how religious devotions may again matter to intelligent people

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THE primary element in all the great world religions has been historically, and still is in fact, the element of ritual. By it, men have ever sought to establish a personal unity between themselves and the Great Reality. In worship they have tried to *experience* religion, to arrive at contact with God. Obviously ritualistic experiences are more fundamental than creeds, which are the intellectual formulation of experiences, or than moral codes, which claim the sanction of spiritual experience. One would suppose that all religionists would recognize this axiom of religious psychology. Yet it is precisely here that the churches of the moment are least serviceable to the agnostic who is trying out the religion of the Incarnation. The purpose of this chapter is to attempt to point out something of the nature of worship and a few of the more glaring faults which atrophy worship at the moment.

Our word "worship" comes from an Anglo-Saxon original meaning "to acknowledge worth." Any service rendered to another person in recognition of his superiority was, and is, an act of worship. Divine veneration is, then, something we do toward God as evidence of our deliberate acknowledgment of his superiority to us and ours.

If this be remembered, it is easy to see one thing which is wrong with much around us which calls itself worship. Very largely the current concern seems to be with what emotional effect devotional practices may have upon or within the worshipers. No one can doubt that effective worship may, and frequently does, impart emotional satisfactions; but these ought to be wholly incidental, and indeed usually accidental. A true worshiper, one in the best and perhaps only valid human tradition of the practice, is intent upon giving something, not upon getting anything. For a man or woman to say, "I do not go to church because I get nothing out of it," is to cast suspicion either upon his or her own intelligence or else upon that of his or her educators. The real reason why worship has always been a vital and genuinely popular human activity is not that it tickles spines with thrills, but rather that it enables men and women to express their loyalty to One who is perfect Truth, Beauty, Goodness. Only

by such expression does God come more and more to matter. One chief reason why churches are increasingly empty is because they are too much concerned with ministering to the people and too little given to offering opportunity to the people to make oblation of themselves to deity. The old king in the Bible said of the great temple at Jerusalem a thing true of all proper houses of worship: "The palace is not for man, but for the Lord God."[1] Most people do not wish to be coddled spiritually. What they do demand is a chance for self-oblation. Worship should be God-centered.

From the word itself, also, comes light upon a second difficulty of the moment. Not only is the center of worship God, but God regarded as Lord, Master, Superior, King, the Absolute. There seems to be current among many Christians a curious notion that the Eternal has somehow abdicated, and made Himself a mere citizen in a sort of celestial republic, in which the members of the human race have a vote and dignity almost if not quite equal to His. We must have, such queer people say, "democracy in religion." If that means, as apparently it usually does, that we are to submit the decrees of God to a human referendum, and calmly decide by plebiscite whether there is to be a Lord of Lords any

[1] I Chronicles 29:1.

longer or only a constitutional president, then this notion of "democracy in religion" is probably the craziest of all our contemporary insanities. To have a religion at all, we must have a Perfection to be adored. The agnostic seeking a faith knows that well enough. Knowing it, he possibly decides to go to church. If he finds, as he often does, a chatty, friendly little group having a nice conversazione with deity, sitting the while in comfortable pews, all sweet and homey, it is apt to make him laugh, and to say, "This means, and can mean, nothing to me." If he can find people on their knees, with hearts uplifted to the *Unutterable Mystery Who Reveals Himself,* so rapt that among them king and prelate and peasant, social leader and washerwoman, forget their inequalities before Him whose greatness humbles them all alike, that sort of religion may mean something to him. The God worshiped in most churches is not a big enough God, not by a very great deal.

Now that we have remembered that a proper definition of worship makes God, as an Absolute to be adored, the center and reason for being of all that is done therein, it may be well to consider what theories are current about the way such real worship should be designed and performed. There are two of these theories, that which is introspective or subjective and that which is sacramental or objective. The first

prevails among Protestants; the second among various varieties of Catholics.

In the first type, the center of worship is a God who is a disembodied abstraction; looked upon, to be sure, as a reality, but as an unlocated reality. Possibly the individual worshiper may himself do the locating, picturing God as an old man, or as a very strong, athletic man, or as one with a long white beard, sitting afar off. But there is no divine locale common to the whole worshiping group. There is no thought of God as especially present in the very place where they are assembled. If the God worshiped is not conceived of by the individuals participating as located in a far-off heaven, He is apt to be considered by them as a somewhat ghostly aura or atmosphere. By a long series of investigations I have discovered that most such persons visualize God as definitely sitting in the far-off heaven. This deistic conception makes the worshipers regard themselves as in courts of worship far removed from the actual abode of God. It is possibly this very sense of distance which effectually prevents their reacting in physical attitudes and acts as they might if they were convinced that they were in the very throne room of God. There is, at any rate, in this type of church, an absence of those acts of obeisance common to most religions—bowing, kneeling, pros-

tration, beating upon the breast—as well as absence of that pageantry which naturally accompanies a coming into the immediate Presence of a King of Kings. It is always a little hard to feel very vividly the presence of One who is thought of as a million miles or so away, to feel it vividly enough to make one react physically. What I mean is understood if the reader will consider how differently he behaves in contemplation of his wife when she is visiting overseas, let us say, and when she is with him at home. He feels small impulse to stroke her hair when he remembers that her hair is thousands of miles away, nor does he kiss her, or put his arms around her.

The other introspective concept is, as we have said, the idea of God as an enveloping, disembodied aura. If God to a man is that and that merely, he is put to the necessity of trying to communicate with God in a different way than that in which he communicates with any other being. No man is a disembodied aura. Neither are any man's friends. He communicates with his friends through physical intermedia. If my friend were disembodied, one of two things would be necessary, that he and I might have converse. Either I should be compelled, or at least should have to try, to release myself from my body; or else he would be compelled, or at least

would have to try, to get himself into a body. The type of religionist to whom God is a disembodied aura, sincerely believes that God certainly does not get into any sort of a physical body. Therefore he, the worshiper, tries to get out of his body. He tries to forget that he has one, to eliminate it from his attention, and to concentrate his mind upon an effort to communicate with God nonphysically. Consequently, he has little or no need for physical devotions. Indeed, such devotions are a hindrance to him.

The natural result of these two concepts of God, one or other of which is the concept of most Protestants, is that among non-Catholics worship has become increasingly a lost art and, in consequence, day by day loses its hold upon the people. Of course, there are many artistic things about Protestant churches and Protestant services. Only the Quakers have ever tried to eliminate the physical altogether from worship. There is much in all of us that rebels against lack of beauty anywhere, and especially in religion. Protestants are given to adorning churches with paintings and glass and color combinations, to building great organs and hiring expensive singers. But I have found many Protestants who feel that for the most part these things are merely accompaniments of worship, rather than modes of worship; that they are additions to it, sometimes even

hindrances to it, rather than necessary means toward expressing it. The finer the artistic surroundings the more real is this feeling. A Presbyterian gentleman told me not long ago that in the finest Gothic church in the Middle West, a Presbyterian edifice, he had attended service and come away feeling that somehow the beauty was but a shell surrounding a rattling kernel of worship, and in no sense an integral part of the kernel itself. In such temples there is art *and* worship, but hardly the art *of* worship.

Now it must be confessed that both of these mental attitudes which we have ventured to ascribe to current Protestantism are very different indeed from that at the bottom of all the other religions of the earth. In almost every one of such religions God has been thought of as absolute Spirit who, for the sake of communing with men and receiving adoration from them, takes upon Himself definite limitations and dwells in some physical thing. It is by no means certain that even the simplest-minded savage believes that his idol is the *exclusive* abode of his deity. It is, rather, the place where that deity dwells in relationship to him and his fellow worshipers. Every world religion has had what seems to be one universal and instinctive realization, namely, that the spirit must be incarnate in matter before it can be apprehended and duly revered. This is true even

of Mohammedanism, which theoretically rejects much of this next to universal religious idea, but has always found it necessary to worship toward one spot upon the earth, the city of Mecca, the physical dwelling-place of deity.

Catholicism is a form of Christianity—and we ought not to forget that in the days of Christianity's greatest achievement [2] it was the only form of Christianity known—which derives its chief strength not from its organization or from its creedal definition, but rather from its complete devotional acquiescence in this universal assumption. It maintains that Jesus, in his one prescribed act of worship, the Lord's Supper or Mass, recognized the instinctive religious practice of mankind. Catholicism believes that, when Jesus took the bread and broke it, and took the wine and passed it, and said, "This is my body," "This is my blood," he meant to furnish his followers with concrete integument in which throughout the ages he might dwell among men—a means, if you will, by which he might touch and be touched. So far as the relationship of human beings with one another is concerned, our bodies are the media whereby our souls make themselves known to one another. So, says Catholicism, in worship—the es-

[2] No nation has been converted to Christianity since the fifteenth century.

sential feature of which is communion of our spirit and God's Spirit in contact of our body and blood with His Sacramental body and blood. To the Catholic, the bread and wine are Christ's body and the life-blood which permeates that body, and Christians, touching them, in a natural and human way touch him.

Because the Catholic believes this, his worship is utterly different from Protestant worship. His God has a definite place of abode, for the purpose of communion with mankind—the consecrated elements upon the altar. The Presence is felt to be very close, very real. And the Catholic, vividly feeling that he is for the time being in the very throne room, in the intimate presence of Him who sustains, owns, and is to be adored, naturally betakes himself to all sorts of physical expressions of obeisance. Each act of pageantry, each architectural glory, each beauty of music, becomes part of the oblation of the creature face to face with the Creator. Furthermore, the whole group of worshipers have a God localized in the same place. This enables them to use their physical media together. They thus have social oblation, with physical things and acts, to a God definitely localized. Inevitably Catholic worship becomes an art, a thing which Protestant worship succeeds in doing only in the rarest instances.

The purpose of the theological explanations which have immediately preceded is not to advocate the truth or falsity of either of the positions explained. Its purpose has been merely to make plain what is the difference in worship between, let us say, what one finds in St. Peter's in Rome or St. Mary the Virgin's, Times Square, and what may be observed in the Dom in Berlin or in Dr. Fosdick's church on Riverside Drive. In the latter places, worship is directed toward a God whom each person present regards as located in a different place, or else as an aura not located anywhere; while in the former places, it is directed toward where those present all believe their God definitely to be, for worship, concentrated in a bit of blessed bread set in a tabernacle throne upon a central altar. It is this difference in method and theory of worship which divides Christendom into two camps—far more than any creed or theory of apostolical succession.

Into the theological merits of these two variants it is not necessary now to go, but to say that, while Protestant worship is chiefly intellectual, and therefore uninteresting to most agnostics, Catholic worship is almost invariably a highly cultivated art and as such is apt to interest agnostics. What is an art? It is the use of physical media to transmit a spiritual perception. Every true art is sacramental—painting,

sculpture, music, poetry, any one you wish. It has its outward and visible sign and its inward and spiritual thing signified. Catholicism by its symbolic rituals appeals to the artist in man, a thing which the seeking agnostic commonly finds exceedingly helpful. *If Protestantism is to survive, many of us believe, it too must revive sacramentalism in its devotional aspects; it too must revive the art of worship. That is to say, it must become again essentially Catholic—not in creeds necessarily, or ecclesiastic machinery, or even organically, but in what is beneath all these things, its worship.*

It is, after all, chiefly inertia and its engendered prejudice which prevents this restoration. Only one under such influences would maintain today that there is any essential antagonism between matter and God, or that it is impossible to use incarnating media and still obey the injunction to "worship God in spirit and in truth." At any rate, the seeking and informed agnostic who deems historical inertia merely inertia and nothing more—to whom the Protestant Reformation is not a fetish time when saints in round hats were burned by wicked men in miters, but rather a curious complex of gain and disaster, of stupidity and genius, of piety and greed, of heroism and hate, among both Catholics and Protestants—is apt to look at current Protestantism realistically, and

to find it cold, unimaginative, void of romance or drama, and not particularly helpful. His chief desire is for worship—natural, unhampered, free, human; and he finds it irritating to be required meticulously to dematerialize his devotions. Why should he be made to do so? Does anybody know? He does not know why. That at least is certain.

The first prerequisite for a devotional practice soundly in accord with human nature, as that nature stands revealed in the long records of human experience, the first prerequisite also to worship being carried on as one of the arts, *is definite objectivity in the deity*. Whenever religionists get the object of their worship localized, that instant they have achieved the art of worship. Worship, which is the offering, through paint and pageant and music and other means of expression, of an oblation to divinity, cannot be rendered effectively to an indefinite deity. Worship must have perspective. It must have a single point which is its focal center, or it has no coherence, no emphasis, no compulsion.

It may be objected that worship of this sort, concentrated upon a definite place where God by his fiat chooses physically to limit himself to dwell, is childish. The objection is well taken, but it is no objection. Worship is essentially a childish activity.

Because this is so, worship may really and truly be an art.

Appreciation of any beauty is a childish sort of thing. Only mature civilizations are ugly. The naïve ones may be unsanitary, but they have their inevitable charm. There is in a certain museum of art a painting of a street in a snowstorm. People love it and linger in front of it. What makes men like that picture? Or what makes them like in nature a heavy snowstorm at eventide? Is it their mature knowledge of the source of snow, their microscopic examination of crystal formations? Is it a utilitarian remembrance that snow brings work for the unemployed? Is it their fretful prevision of using broom and shovel? They enjoy the snowstorm, and they enjoy that painting, because there is a delightful something about soft-falling snow that makes one forget that one is grown up and bids one revel in childish mystery. In *Tannhäuser,* to take another example, after the Venusberg scene, we find ourselves near a mountain crag in the quiet sunlight. A shepherd boy is playing on a pipe. I have seen many a person cry when it was played. I have wept myself. Why? Simply because it made us forget for a moment the forlorn disillusionments of maturity, with its passion and sin, and as little children again rejoice in the naïve piping of a straying musician on

a happy morning in the spring. I suppose there is not one of us who pretends in any sense to be an artist who does not wish for childhood, not that he might forget the technique of his art but that he might lay hold once more upon the visions which he used to perceive, but which he finds it very hard ever to see again. I suppose we all feel that Wordsworth was at his best in the "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality."

In our religion we need to be a great deal more naïve than we are. We need to say something like this: "Father, this, your church, is to me a place of refuge, where I can forget that I am John Smith the controller of a great business, Henry Jones the financier, Edward Brown the clever novelist, Bill Jones the boot-black, Anne White the stenographer, Mary the second house-maid, Mary Black the famous artist, Jane White the leader of the smart set at Southampton. O God, I am just a little person after all, and I am dreadfully glad that you know it and treat me like one. It is restful and jolly to play around with you, God. See what I have brought for you. I have brought a little money and my little, tired brain; but I have brought other and better things too. I have painted some pictures for your house, and carved some statues, and I am singing the best I know how, and I have fixed up just

as good a childish pageant as I can in your honor. O God, I know these things are nothing much beside the glories of heaven. I cannot sing or paint or offer good gifts as well as the angels can. But, God, these beauties are the best your child can make, and here they are. Will you not come, God of mine, and let me love you a little? And will you not wipe the tears from my eyes and comfort the lonely fear in my heart, and make me strong enough to be a brave child?"

And perhaps what we need most of all is to know that God replies: "Little child—big, grown up, self-sufficient people may call all of this which you have made and do exceedingly foolish; but I know better. They are only canny men. I am God. I see things more clearly than they. You have made a temple and a worship for Me, the best you know how to make, and you give them to Me because you think Me worth your little best; and I love you for it. Your altar you would pretend to be My Throne. Behold I will make it so. Here am I upon it. Bow low and worship, for One is high and lifted up. Behold the Word is again made Flesh and dwells among you, and you behold His glory, as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

If we would judge from the experience of the race, even as we learn that the first principle of sound

worship is a centralizing objectivity, so we perceive that *the second principle is naïveté on the part of the worshipers.* As long as worshipers are set on being dignified, determined to be merely adult, adoration will be cold and heartless, religion void of reality. Except we be converted, and become as little children, we shall not see the Kingdom of God.

I should like, also in this chapter, to make a few concrete suggestions about the technique of worship. In so doing I shall try to speak of things possible for Protestants as well as for Catholics; fundamental things, common to all successful worship, from that of the primitive savage to the highest developed and most elaborated civilized ritual. Attention to them might greatly help in the nurture of souls already committed to Christ, and also in the regaining of the unchurched masses.

First, a temple should be designed to make man think of God and not of the worshipers. Many modern churches are shallow and broad—I refrain from obvious remarks about the relationship of architecture to philosophy—designed for convenience in hearing sermons. We must get rid of audience chambers before we shall have worship. A church building should be long and deep and high. Vertical lines and climbing arches tend to make men appear properly small, to relieve self-consciousness.

Light should be dim, especially in the daytime. Hymn books should be printed with type of reasonable size, so that a calcium is not necessary for the reading of them. The further end of the church, the altar end or the pulpit end, should be well lighted, from hidden fixtures. And there should be as much unimpeded space as possible between the people and this focal spot. Thus the attention of the worshipers will all be drawn, from the moment they enter the church, toward an objective ahead of them and beyond them.

The minister should face the same way as the people when he leads their devotions, and never toward them. If he faces them, they feel instinctively that they are the center of things. If he faces away from them, they realize instantly that they and he have a common deity who is beyond them all. This is very important, and quite generally overlooked.

Congregations should kneel when they pray, for the simple reason that that act of contrition and humility is a symbol of acknowledgment that they are in the presence of One immensely superior to them, even though He may, indeed, be their Friend. To make kneeling possible, slanting floors should be considered an abomination, and sufficient space should be left between the rows of seats.

Choirs should be vested in such a way as to re-

move from their members not only individual peculiarities in dress, but also all thought from everyone, including themselves, that they are merely concert singers. They should face the same way that the congregation does, for they are singing to God and not to the people. There is nothing more destructive to a feeling of worship than to have some fat tenor or some simpering soprano chant for the intended edification of the congregation, or of some particular person in it. It is well, if possible, to place the choir behind the congregation and out of their sight. Music which comes from behind a man is, or seems, his own; music from in front is a thing apart from him. After all, chancel choirs are merely an unintelligent survival of what was sane and reasonable in monastic churches, where a few men sang offices to which the people were not supposed to come. It is necessary to have everyone somehow feel that the choir is merely leading the congregation, or else supplying for the congregation its musical deficiencies, in the offering to God. The moment the concert element enters in, devotion flies out of the window.

Prayers and hymns should be written in the very best of English, and decently said, or else sung to music that is music. That means usually that prayers need to be previously composed. Most of us

talk villainously bad English. We must offer our best to God. How anyone can hope for artistic worship when their minister talks gutter-slang to God, I know not. Shall my converse with God be in the patois of a group of newsboys on the corner? And how anyone can hope for artistic worship in which there is the singing of jig-tune hymns, is past man's understanding. One does not play Irving Berlin's latest rag as a wedding march, or Ted Snyder's hottest effusion at the funeral of one's mother. Neither does one sing from a Sawdust Psalter when worshiping Him who sits between the cherubim. One of the first steps in the restoration of worship will be large bonfires of trashy hymnals.

The collection of money should be made as inconspicuous as possible, and its mention eliminated from services of worship, except it be reverently prayed for. In this respect my own communion is especially a sinner. In most Episcopal churches the choir sings an anthem; six hushed-looking vestrymen march down the aisles collecting the coin; these march up the center aisle after the anthem is over; meanwhile the congregation rises and waits in solemn reverence; an assistant takes the offering; the minister lifts it high and offers it; and the choir chants the Doxology with much fervor. Any stranger from Mars would be certain that we were

worshiping the cash as our divinity. A good many Church people *are* doing that, of course; but the Church is not commissioned to encourage it. And as for interrupting the service to harangue the people on the necessity of paying their pledges and giving money to this, that and t'other—well, the church that is inept enough to do that sort of thing deserves to be in want.

Another thing that seems bad liturgics is the stopping to announce that the woman's guild will hold a rummage sale on Tuesday, the scouts will meet on Wednesday, the tiny toddlers will toddle on Friday afternoon, etc., etc. Let these notices be printed, or mimeographed, and distributed after service. They interrupt continuity of thought, dissipate attention from God, and are a nuisance to one trying to worship his Creator.

Finally, a word as to the place of the sermon. Wherever it occurs it should be short; and it should never be last. It is a very modern custom anyway, and one of questionable value, to have sermons and services of devotion at the same time. In early days the spiritual discourse was a separate thing. Often it was preached out of doors, before or after service, or even in the middle of the week. People gathered sometimes for exhortation and instruction, and at other times for worship. If we must continue

to have the two at the same time, then obviously the greater should overshadow the less. The worship is more important than the preaching, for while the latter may be a means of imparting the spiritual ideas of a great man, the former is communion with Almighty God. The place of climax in a service is its end. It is what is done then that the people subconsciously esteem the thing of maximum importance. It is bad art to put the sermon there. The sermon ought to be well forward in the service. Furthermore, it should be designed to lead up to that worship which is to be the later climax of the service. It should present a human need or a duty to be done in such a way that the people will make that the theme of their subsequent prayer, or it should offer God as a strength and comfort and power in such a way that the people will feel that strength and comfort and power as the devotions proceed. Most preachers seem to ignore all this. Their sermons are quite often mere lectures; it may be religious lectures, but quite unrelated to the worship which they accompany and frequently interrupt. I am of the impression that people are tired of lectures in sermon time. What they really desire is to be taught how to render worship in a way that will render them (because they have been to church), the more able to do their duty like men and women.

If we would restore worship as an art, we must teach the preacher that his function is to bring men to God and not to bring them to himself.

It has been the endeavor in this chapter to point out two fundamental principles of psychology back of all artistic worship, two psychological prerequisites: first a definite objectivity, and second a child-like naïveté; and then to offer some concrete illustrations of violations of artistic requirement, and to suggest a few practical improvements. Worship is, or may be made, the most popular of all the arts. Of them all it is the easiest to be enjoyed and practiced by the common man. It was in the beginning the father of the other arts: painting, architecture, sculpture, music, pageantry. It is an art, too, that all humanitarian persons should be willing to sacrifice much to promote, for it has within it the possibility of making the dull gray of human living shine through and through with the prismatic beauties of the glory of God.

X

As Dying and Behold We Live

In which the Pilgrim faces two problems difficult to be avoided

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But, after all, a man's religion means to him nothing that is of any particular importance, unless he is enabled thereby to face with conviction and courage the fundamental realities of his earthly life. It is required of a man that he should not dodge the facts, even though they be most unpleasant and even alarming to contemplate. If, indeed, the Christian venture of faith, with which one is urged to supplement one's inevitable agnosticism, has within it that which impels one to look squarely at the essential tragedy of human life, and to rise above it without a sense of defeat and futility, it has passed the acid test of worth to human beings.

The apparent tragedy of our life, which must somehow be faced and surmounted, is twofold: first, that in life pain is inevitable and central; second, that in the end we are defeated and destroyed by death. What, if anything, can be done with these tragedies,

in the light of the Christian religion? Let us consider them in turn.

Sorrow and pain are fundamental facts of life, to be experienced by every human being.[1] This is no less true now than in the past. Man has discovered many palliatives for pain, but no cure. Man has been able to prolong life, but in the end he still must die; and it is at least possible that with the lengthening of life has come increase of strain, of sorrow, of disappointment, to be borne. The total amount of sorrow which man must endure has at least not been lessened with the passing years; only its character has been changed, not its amount. The longer we live and the higher our development, the greater is our knowledge of pain. This seems to be in accordance with biological law: the more complex the organism the more its sensitivity. Vegetables feel no pain. As far as we can observe worms feel next to none of it even when we cut them in two. The more complicated the animal the more the anguish possible and necessary. In man, the highest organism as yet created, agony is manifold. Physical pain tortures him more than it does any of the beasts; anxiety and the sense of sin and the sense of failure to achieve, all add their mental quota; finally, there

[1] It will be seen that I have been reading Canon Streeter's *Reality,* in my opinion the best book on Religion written in the twentieth century.

are the deepest and most poignant of all sorrows, the tribulations of love—not merely the adolescent pains of passion, although even they are of a seriousness not to be minimized, but the haunting woe of loneliness, of disappointed reaching out of one's soul for a comradeship which one never adequately finds. All of these things together form a complex of sorrow which must be faced as an inevitable part of life, and for which some explanation must be discovered. From time immemorial man has been trying to arrive at what that explanation is.

The easiest solution is to ignore it. At least that is easy when one is young. The burden of the reality of pain rarely comes to men and women until they have arrived at considerable maturity. Only those youths who are imaginative can see what is involved later on. Blindness to the inevitability of sorrow is, of course, the chief weakness of youth, the explanation of its apparent superficiality, the secret of its false optimism, the reason it cannot be entrusted with control over the affairs of men. When we are young, despite the fact that we see other people in travail all about us, it seems to us absurd to think that we, too, shall be called upon to endure. Ahead of us, bathed in rosy color, lie the hills and valleys of tomorrow. Only those who are peculiarly sensitive can then appreciate what life is and must be

for all human beings, including eventually themselves.

There is always among human beings a tendency to offer even into maturity the denial of pain, even its vehement denial, as constituting an explanation. It is all, some people insist, an illusion of the human brain. Everything is good in this perfectly harmonious world. This smiling subterfuge has frequently presented itself even in religion, taking upon itself the sacred name of Jesus Christ. I am not thinking merely of that strange phenomenon founded by Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, the peak of the development of which seems past. I am thinking rather of something much more common and much more dangerous. I am thinking of how greatly Protestantism, and even to some extent Catholicism, has degenerated under the influence of a spurious optimism. There is a "Pollyanna" quality about most modern faiths which offends those who must face reality. Many offer to us a religion in which there is no crucifix as the center of worship. Perhaps there may be a gilded cross, from which the agony has been removed. Perhaps there is no cross at all, lest we be reminded of what once was there. We wish Easter flowers and Easter joy, but with no aching fast before Calvary as a prelude. There is an easy assumption that serenity and peace are

to be attained by affirmation rather than by fierce, heartrending agony endured. So much of this sentimental treacle has emanated from the churches that many men and women who are realistically alert to life have left them to their pretty-pretty God of make-believe, and have gone their way to nobler things. The trouble with most which passes for modernistic Christianity is not that it is sinful or stupid, although it is often both, but rather that it is sentimental. It dodges pain.

There is a second solution of the problem of sorrow which at first glance seems sane, but which is, nevertheless, inadequate—the solution which says that sorrow is, but that God is not. How can there be evil in this world, and agony for men, if indeed there is a good God who presides over the universe? There is, there can be, no God. This atheistic solution does explain pain. It makes us the helpless creatures of blind force. But in explaining evil in this way we fail utterly to explain good. It leaves us with nothing for which to strive. It makes life a mad nightmare. It makes death better than living. The explanation is too easy. Evil, sin, pain, woe—these are not all that there is of life. There are also courage, faith, hope, joy, love. Neither side of the picture may be neglected if we are to arrive at an adequate description.

A better but still inadequate explanation is based on the belief that justice is the central concept back of everything. In India, especially, this theory has been brought to high development, in the doctrine of *Karma.* According to this way of looking at things, all suffering is punishment for sin and self-will. Man objects to this and says, "I have endured many, many things which I have not deserved." *Karma* replies, "It may be that you have not merited them in this life, but in some previous existence which was yours you sinned and now you pay." Man objects again, "Behold, I see the unrighteous in great prosperity and happy all the day. Surely he escapes all payment for his wickedness." *Karma* replies, "That may be so, as far as this existence goes, but in incarnations yet to come this evil man who now avoids all ill, will have to pay, here on this earth, the penalty. Sin and suffering are equal. The punishment does fit the crime."

There are two things wrong with this solution. In the first place, there is absolutely no evidence that man lives on this earth more than once. Secondly, and more important, if life does consist only of satisfying for one's sin by one's pain, if there is no creative purpose in life higher than a just restitution to stern destiny, then life is really a dead and futile thing; then we are no sharers in anything that

grows and develops; then the best that we can do is to pay a debt; then the greatest man is he who does no wrong, rather than he who does good; then happy is the man who does nothing for fear that he may do wrong; then the noblest achievement is to kill desire and to sit beside the Indian road in perpetual inactivity. Such a world, a world built upon cold justice, is an intolerable world. It gets nowhere. The purpose of sorrow cannot be merely to pay for sin committed.

The only other solution at which man has arrived is one which is not so much rational as vital—the solution of Jesus Christ: the knowledge that in Reality, in God Himself is a great creative agony of willed compassion; the conviction that pain may be by any person, with God's help, transmuted from agony purposelessly endured to agony creatively used; the realization that sorrow may release a vast dynamic which alone can build human values, build them not merely in the sufferer himself but in the whole world of humanity. By pain comes power. It is the tool whereby mankind may be lifted from the level of the beasts to the level of the gods. Agony is not to be denied or merely to be endured; it is to be employed. To the extent that I meet, with aggressive personality, the complex of physical woe and mental strain and the burden of loneliness and

the heartbreak of rejection, in the measure that I bear that which the sins and stupidities of all creation have engendered, and offer them to God as my bit for the woes of mankind, to that degree I am freed from personal inhibitions, that I may create—create strong men out of weaklings, brave women out of cowards, children who are worth while, friends who grow. In that creative transmutation of my sorrow I shall find myself happy, freed from futility, a co-creator with God of that which was meant to be.

Fortunately for us, Jesus, who knew the limitations of mankind as well as its possible glories, has taught all this to us not merely by verbal explanation, but, more effectively, by the great drama, the greatest of all dramas, wherein he himself shares in that creative pain. Surely he, too, has borne our sorrows. He is acquainted with grief. He who is equal with God, yet makes himself of no reputation, and in flesh like ours endures all things, even to the death of the cross. "In him God enters into the world's agony and breaks its downward drag and transmutes it into victory." He hangs, in this ageless drama, upon his cross, over against Jerusalem. There, in that city, all that is evil is rewarded with prosperity, while he who hangs outside upon a silent tree and is in all things good is yet racked in rejection. This

is life: in externalities, life as it is; in internal force, life as it may become.

From contact with Jesus crucified there has come to Christians through the centuries, and still does come, not a logical explication of the problem of sorrow—that lies hidden deep in the mind of God, too deep for any man to go—but rather what does equally well suffice, an ability bravely to use pain. From every such facing of difficulty there has been released, and still is released, power—power which creates life, reveals life, completes life. All that we are which is above the level of the beasts, has come from such nobilities in those who have gone before us. It is nothing much to endure pain which is deserved. Almost anybody can do that. It is to endure pain, suffering wrongfully, which helps in the salvation of all that vast creation which, as says the Apostle, "groans and travails in agony together until now." Since the Crucifix is the mirror of life as it is and may be, it is small wonder that it remains the holiest symbol of the human race. It is small wonder that the perpetual pleading of Calvary's sacrifice in the Sacrament of the Altar is still the central act of human worship. It is small wonder that in the Communion of the Body and Blood of the torn Christ is the sustaining power of human life.

Nor should we turn to any other consideration until there have been said two brief things more about that sharing of ours in the agony of Calvary, by which alone its benefits may accrue to us. There are many people who admit this of which we have been speaking, but who nevertheless fail, by two small and difficult steps, in making it their own. Two things we must do if Calvary is to be anything more than a pitiful pageant, if it is to be for us a source of personal vitality.

In the first place, we must fully regard the fact of our own problems, pains, sorrows. That is what the Lord did. That is what Gethsemane means. We must look the problems of our own living fearlessly in the face. We must know those problems as they are. This applies not merely to such easy things, comparatively easy things, as physical illness. It applies to deeper things as well. For instance, a woman came to me over a year ago and said: "I married when I was eighteen. It was a ghastly mistake. Now that I am in my thirties, I have for the first time come to love—but not my husband. What shall I do? Divorce is impossible, not only because I am a Christian but because my husband still loves me. I cannot face this thing. It is too much for anyone." She had to face it, in all its implications. Of course, it meant for her a new Calvary; but as

long as she dodged the issue all she had was pain, purposeless pain. There are not many of us called upon to face that particular problem, although there are more than some people seem to suppose, but our problems are equally only unrelieved tragedy, whatever those problems may be, until we face them. All that there is, is agony, accomplishing nothing. Once they are faced, we may use that agony creatively.

The second thing that needs to be remembered is this, that once the problem has been faced and offered to the Eternal to be used for mankind, there must be no further complaining. After Gethsemane, the Lord took what was coming to him without a word. We are for the most part not that brave. We are continually demanding pity; pity from our friends and relatives, pity from ourselves, pity even from God. I know a man who prepared himself for more than thirty years that he might do one great thing, only to find at the end of that time that he was never going to have the opportunity to do that thing. He faced it, he offered to God that disappointed ambition. But over and over again he demands the pity of us who know him, and, every time he does demand that pity, the agony becomes again only agony and all the purpose is gone from it.

But you say, "I cannot face my problem, and, hav-

ing faced it, keep forever silent. I cannot." You must. "I cannot." You must. Jesus does it and so must you. Can you drink of the cup of which he drinks, or be baptized with the baptism wherewith he is baptized? There is nothing superficial about the Christian life.

That is what the Holy Cross is all about. Christianity does furnish a solution of the problem, not a logical solution but a superlogical one. And the hold of Christianity upon human beings until today and beyond into tomorrow is chiefly attributable to that fact.

Let us now turn from a consideration of pain and sorrow to the thought of something even more terrifying to most people, to the thought of death.

Death is a subject concerning which this present day is to a most extraordinary degree sentimental. We modern people, by a conspiracy of silence and pretending, attempt to forget that there is such a thing. We make, for instance, our funerals to be as much unlike funerals as possible. We even dress up our dead as though they were alive, and place them in receptacles as little like coffins and as much like couches as possible. Often one sees dead faces rouged, dead bodies decked as for a feast. When one stops to think of it, the whole attitude is macabre and unhealthy, morbid, indecent. We even try

as far as we can to avoid the mortuary word. People "pass on" or "pass away" or "fall asleep"; they do everything else but plain "die." But, of course, we do not for all our elaborate contriving avoid the fact of death. No matter how foolish we may be about it, death is there awaiting each one of us, and almost before we know it. *Rapit mors velociter.*

Our attitude in regard to death is characteristic of that general absence of thought which is fond of calling itself modern thinking. Contemporary thought, as has been more or less directly hinted in this book, seems chiefly to be characterized by this, that it concerns itself with all the things which count for least, and ignores most of the things which matter most. It emphasizes, for example, all the ways in which man is like the beasts, and is quite unconcerned with the ways in which man is unlike the beasts—which latter ways happen to be the only things which really matter much about man. It asks *what* with the utmost scientific earnestness, and rarely thinks of asking *why*—which question, left unanswered, makes the *what* question so unimportant as to be almost impertinent. Modern thought is always talking of origins and rarely speaks of destinies; and this although almost every philosopher from Aristotle down has realized that

nothing has a meaning except in terms of its completed development. The result is a common belief, implicit in almost all the chatter which one hears, that evolution has somehow stopped and that man as he is has reached maturity—a most absurd hallucination. We modern people are absorbed in fact-accumulation, with little realization that facts are no good to a man unless he has a philosophy, unless he knows what to do with the facts, or at least thinks that he knows what to do with them. We are given to making goods without any great concern about how those goods are to be used when we have made them, and in enlarging leisure with no notion of how to employ our increasing spare time. We are concerned with "mastering nature," oblivious of the inevitability of nature mastering each one of us in the near future. Modern thought bids men work and struggle and sorrow, as though somehow one could profit from these things in terms of the material and external world, when all the while it is absolutely sure that most of those who read these words will be, as far as the external world goes, dead—completely and ignominiously dead—in less than fifty years. This "modern thought" is a funny thing. Also it has within it, or rather not within it, such things as make, by their absence, for unrelieved tragedy.

Our chief mistake about living seems to lie in an eager willingness to regard as essentially important things which are external to our inner being. These externalities, for which most modern people live, are absurdly inadequate as objects of cultivation when one views them with a remembrance of death in one's mind. *Money?* There are no pockets in a shroud. *Prestige and reputation?* Most people are forgotten by the world before their bones have rotted. Even the greatest and most exceptional men and women of the past are to almost all of us only disembodied names. And lucky they are, perhaps, at that. They might have been ridiculed by some John Erskine or given a post-mortem psycho-analysis, such as Mr. Woodward has lately given to poor old General Grant or as Lytton Strachey has given to Queen Elizabeth. Oblivion is the *happy* lot of most reputations. *Power and authority over men?* To possess them even in this world is dust and ashes; and after this world they mean nothing. Even the captains and the kings depart. *Passion?* If we live to middle age we know, long before we die, that that is a Dead Sea apple. *Children?* Can one gain satisfaction from children? Hardly. They have their own lives to live, and are for the most part ill-content to sacrifice those lives to give meaning to the lives of their fathers and mothers. Most parents

know well enough, by the time their children have grown up, the loneliness which lies in having expected a comradeship which sons and daughters usually will not give, can not give. And when parents do die, they become a quickly vanishing memory in their children's minds. That is not wicked. Life is built that way. All these things—money, prestige, reputation, power, authority, passion, children—are external to the inner man. As such, they depart—some of them long before death, all of them at death. It is only the naked soul which may go on.

"But does the inner life go on, when the body has perished, as perish it must? Can you prove that it goes on?" Well, to put the whole thing in its simplest and most elementary terms—its undergraduate terms, if you will—there is at least, at the very least, a gambler's chance that it does go on, and that therefore it is worth cultivation here and now. And there is no gambler's chance at all, none whatever, of anything else, any external values, being carried on beyond the grave. On a basis of survival, one has a chance of finding a meaning for one's life. On a basis of nonsurvival, a basis of this life only, one has no chance whatever. The cards are stacked. The dice are loaded.

Of course, one cannot prove, by mathematical or

scientific demonstration, that life goes on after death. The strongest reason for believing that it does, lies in this, that man overwhelmingly has had and still does have the *conviction* that life is more than this life. This in itself would not be any great reason for believing it, were it not for the reason *why* of this human insistence. The reason why is that it has never been possible for man, thinking man, on a basis of *this life only,* to make life anything but meaningless nonsense. What is the meaning of me? I am born in pain. I go through the trials of boyhood and the strains of adolescence. It is all preparatory, of course. Even in college nobody really thinks that he is living. He is getting ready for life. Life is in the future. Through my years of maturity and strength and power I go on, working, learning, sinning, repenting, struggling. I endure it all, and with it the pain of misunderstanding and rejection, and the growing bitterness of man's almost intolerable loneliness. Life does not arrive. I never grow up. I am still a child. It is still preparatory, and I know it. Life is still ahead of me. If, when at length I come to have some vague notion of how to be a man and to live like one, all that happens is extinction, it were better that I had never been born. Even the oldest man, on the verge of death,

might well repeat that epitaph which was carved on the baby's tombstone:

> "Since 'tis so soon that I am done for,
> I wonder what I was begun for."

In those terms life is a ghastly nightmare, and what gods there be are foul fiends, laughing with hellish glee as we poor rats are tortured in our trap.

Whenever a man comes to me and says, "Padre, I do not believe in a future life, to be prepared for by the cultivation of the soul," I always counter by saying: "Then what, in the name of all that is true, *do* you believe in? Nobody cares a cracked button about what you do not believe in, about death, life, God, man, or devil. The only thing that matters in the least, or that does not bore your friends, is what you *do* believe in. Do you, perchance, believe in *this* life, a life of externalities—that such a life is worth the living? Do you put your trust in the worth of seventy years or so, spent in fruitless search for a happiness to which you know, if you have half an eye on what goes on around you, you will never come, in increasingly agonized appeal for love and lovers which you find never do, after all, effectually pierce through those walls which isolate your lonely soul; years which shall end, when perhaps you have begun to learn a little how to make

outer things serve your inner need, only in disease, decay, senility and—that is all? Do you believe in *that?* Then is your act of faith less a thing of reason, more a sheer miracle, than the faith of any man who believes in a future life. There may be no evidence for his belief, but there is all the evidence against your belief. Or else, it may be, your faith in this life is not a miracle at all, but is due to plain ignorance. It may be that you are still too young to look life in the face."

That last is, of course, the condition of most of our younger folk. Dean Sperry of Harvard said not long ago a very true thing, namely, that it is futile and a little ridiculous to ask the opinion of undergraduates about religion, because most of them are utterly ignorant of the nature of that life which it is the function of religion to explain. I think that to be a profoundly sensible remark. Usually our younger people have been carefully brought up in cotton wool. They are inexperienced. They look for first-rate joys where only tenth-rate joys are to be found. Sex, for instance, seems to them pregnant with a breathless and soul-filling happiness which sex does not *per se* contain. They romantically overvalue marriage also. Hardly any pleasure has begun to cloy. They live mostly in a fools' paradise. Philosophy is *non est* and religion impossible until one

knows that Paradise is Paradise Lost, and to be Paradise Regained only at the end of some sort of Via Dolorosa. It is only the inner life which matters.

What are the things which feed the inner life? I should like to suggest four of them. I doubt if there are any others than these four.

First, the Pursuit of Truth: not the mere gathering of facts and mastery of processes, but the patient search for the significance behind the facts and processes. This involves more than science. Science is necessary. Scientists do the spade work for the philosophers, dig up material on the nature of which wise men may ponder. Let us not be deceived. Knowing the facts and knowing the truth are two things. The truth is the *meaning* of the facts. Truth and the search for it enrich the soul. No man ever wholly arrives at the truth, but to touch the hem of truth's garment, even to catch a glimpse of her hurrying by in the distance, is to be forever a little more of a man. Such experiences lie beyond the power of death. They are within. They may survive the Great Assize.

Second, the Attempt to Create Beauty. It is not enough to look on beauty. No one knows what beauty really is until he has at least tried to create it —until he has attempted to manipulate mass or line or color or sound or language, that that which he

has apprehended may be realized, until he looks on that which he has made and says, "Here there is Beauty, where no Beauty was." In the winter of 1928 I preached in the most glorious of contemporary American buildings, the chapel at Princeton. Everyone who sees it thinks it wonderful. But I have seen its architect, as he spoke of it. I have noted the flash of proper pride in his eye, the gentleness of glory in his voice. He made this thing. It is his forever. "Here there is Beauty, where no Beauty was." I can imagine what Stephen Benét may feel as he reads that wonderful lyric of his in *John Brown's Body,* the one which follows the union of Ellyat and the Hiders girl, that lyric which has within it the glory and the beauty and the ecstasy, and the wistfulness of subsidence, which dwell in passion at its best. "Here there is Beauty, where no Beauty was." We cannot all make cathedrals or carve out lyrics which shall move men's hearts. But what we have to do, we may do beautifully, and so create new beauty. And every time we make a thing of beauty—even though our product be no more than a well-turned phrase or a silence when silence is fit —there is enrichment of the inner life. Thus are souls strengthened until they need not fear lest death destroy.

Third, the Venture of Love: not love in an amative

or procreative sense alone; not love as it is revealed in the *True Story Magazine,* or even in the more subtle but still only carnal terms of Havelock Ellis and Joseph Krutch—not love as any kind of *schweinerei;* but love which is a sublimation of all that, and more besides; love born of great, compassionate desire to give that some one else may have, suffer that some one else may be happy, die that some one else may live; love sometimes, though alas! not often, of man for woman or of woman for man—more often of parent for a child—sometimes love like that of Brother Francis, which breaks all bounds and includes all men and women and children that there be, and all the cattle too. What many men call love is only a prelude to what love may become. This love which is truly love may be for any man, when once he has grown to the stature where he is content to love even without return of love. Every man feels it moving within him sometimes. It lives on living, grows on being exercised. And every venture in such love as that, gives treasure to the inner man which neither life nor death nor any other creature may destroy.

And last, that Reaching Out for God which is Religion. From the beginning God has mattered to the race of men—God who is Reality laid hold on as a Person. God is the Truth—the meaning behind

the facts, for Truth is not merely a syllogism to be mastered but a Person to be adored; God is the supreme artist, maker of Beauty, sustainer of men who would create; God is the master lover, whom to love is to find all other loves exalted in the love of Him. No man hath seen God at any time, save as He has vouchsafed the sight of Himself in terms incarnate. In the perfect Epiphany of God, in *Jesus,* men as variant as Pasteur and Francis of Assisi, and women as differing as Catherine of Sienna and the Little Flower, have known Him present. We have found Him in the silence of praying, and, even more vividly, as we have knelt in adoration while the priest has held aloft the ever-pleaded Sacrifice. To neglect our religion is to starve our inner being, for every touch of God enriches the soul with treasure that not even the power of hell can take away.

"Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labor *until the evening.*" So sings the Psalmist. And what then? If one has lived in terms of things external to one's inner self, what then? But if that work has been the pursuit of Truth, the attempt to create Beauty, the venture of Love; if that labor has been the reaching out for the Incarnate God, the Living Christ; if the soul has *indeed been fed: there shall be light at eventide.*

XI

In Conclusion

Having arrived somewhere, the Pilgrim tries briefly to state his point of view, and not his merely

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At the end of this book, the inadequacy of which I know full well, it is perhaps fitting that I should state quite definitely the fundamental convictions at which, to my essential peace of mind and courage, I have managed to arrive without in the process having been guilty, as far as I can see, of any denial of modern knowledge or any narcotizing of the intellect.

1. I am quite sure that Truth, the Meaning of things, the everlasting Reason Why, cannot be arrived at by any man through reason when it acts solely upon such evidence as is furnished by science. Science reveals to us mysteries ever more vast, but only mysteries for all their vastness. I am sure that most of our sad modern discouragement comes from depending too largely upon this impossibly inadequate data. By science, unless it be supplemented, I am left as truly ignorant about the meaning of time,

space, man, life, death, as certainly unaware of the meaning of myself, as ever were my ancestors in any generation. I know this, not only because my own small scientific knowledge points that way, but also because every outstanding scientist that I have ever met has assured me that in this respect I am quite right. Human reason is not in itself an agency by which man discovers anything; but is, rather, the intellectual faculty by which man arranges in some sort of order the data which he has managed to accumulate by experience and observation. Knowledge is enlarged only by the gaining of new material upon which reason may go to work. Without adequate experience reason is powerless to arrive much of anywhere. Since scientific experience confessedly reveals nothing ultimate, it is to other and supplementing sorts of experience that I must go for data sufficient for the making of a life philosophy. My recognition of this was prerequisite to my ever arriving at an activity-releasing peace.

2. There is another, an extrascientific sort of experience which is open to man, a sort of experience which cannot be ignored—the experience of person in contact with person. We all have some taste of it, in our converse with other human beings. It is, as everyone knows when he examines his own life, the most precious and revealing of all types of ex-

perience. Even in its least developed forms it involves contact of one's whole being, not with things less than oneself, but with entities equal to oneself. It is essentially a mystical sort of thing. That is to say, it reveals reality impossible of definition, for the most part unexplainable, immediately and directly apprehended. I cannot analyze my loves; but I know that they are, and also that they show to me things more noble, more beautiful, more penetrating, more true than I can otherwise perceive.

3. Religion always has been, and still is, a way of living based upon an act of faith that Ultimate Reality is also a Person—to be loved first with the heart, and then with the will and the strength, and *finally* with all the mind that one has. On the assumption that there is a God, like all other persons—only perfect where they are imperfect, mature where they are undeveloped, unlimited where they are constrained—who may be apprehended through love, there is some hope of getting at a little of the Truth; more hope than there is by the way of science. As a scientist I and all other men are next to impotent. As scientists we can get at secondary truths with relative ease, but at primary truths not at all. As lovers there is open to us a more adequate technique.

4. But I cannot love, in any sense that means anything, a Being beyond the power of my imagination

to envisage. There is no use in my pretending that I can. When I cannot even make a picture of matter, time, or space—all of which are quite beyond the ability of the human mind—I must certainly not be dishonest enough to say that I can picture the Eternal Being to whom time, space, and matter have the same relationship that my handwork has to me. I am, always must be, an humble agnostic.

5. To meet this insufficiency of mine, if I am indeed ever to love my God and by loving come to know Him, He must somehow reveal Himself to incompetent me within the terms of my poor manhood. I cannot, even if I will, go soaring off into realms beyond my human wits. No man may with searching find out God. I, therefore, make my further act of faith. I believe that for us men and for our salvation the Eternal has assumed, of His own volition and because of His own compassion, our human limitations. I believe in Jesus Christ. I believe that he is God-made-man—not was once, but is now. I recognize well enough that God must be vastly more than can be fully revealed in terms of humanity; and yet I am confident that what by the Incarnation is revealed is indeed God—all of God that the mind and soul of man may apprehend. That is to say, I am a Christian.

6. And why do I believe this? Not merely be-

cause it is recorded in a book do I believe it, although I have discovered that the New Testament, when one examines it in the light of modern scholarship and without predisposition in its favor, turns out to be rather better authenticated and more on the side of the angels than the man in the streets is led to believe by our more radical weekly papers and our more widely advertised popular treatises. Nor do I believe it merely because it seems to me a highly probable thing for God to have become incarnate to reveal to man what man must know if, indeed, man is to live, and yet what man cannot for himself discover. Nor do I believe it merely because millions on millions of men and women have, on the basis of believing it, found discoverable Truth and Beauty and Goodness beyond all other finding out. All these had something to do with my *becoming* a Christian. They were predisposing considerations. But the real reason why *I am* a Christian is because I myself, having assumed Christianity true for purpose of experiment, have found revealed a glory in life which is past the power of my poor pen to describe, a peace and a courage sufficient to make life worth the living and—as I know by one exceedingly vivid experience—even death a thing not at all to be abhorred.

7. In the light of these two acts of faith, in God

and in the God-man, prayer has become to me a thing intensely real, since by it I may effectively offer my life and my will to His conforming. And the Holy Communion, wherein day by day I hold up my need for His sustaining, after I have pleaded the perfect achievement of Him for my own inadequacy, has been and is a means of receiving from Him a strength and a vitality and a serenity which also are impossible of statement. These experiences have made me not bigoted but compassionate; not conceited but humble. Nobody knows better than I what a fool I am; but He is wise. It is not concealed from me that I am a creature quite ugly; but He is beautiful. And well do I know that I am a sinful man; but He is good. His patience and His understanding and His faith in me are all that make me able to become even to a small extent a decent man. I know from experience, as Paul did, that "our sufficiency is of God."

8. Finally, in all of this adventure into what I am sure is sanity, I have denied no truth—at least consciously. I have blinked no fact which science has revealed, turned my back on no new truth or old one either. In love there is no fear. My mind is searching unconstrained, with all of its poor best effort. What I shall find, or other men shall find, has no scare latent in it. I find within myself no

trace of obscurantism. I am a citizen of the twentieth century. I also am a happy man.

This book has been full of the first person singular pronoun. For this I offer no apology. Surely that is what is required. It is necessary that a man give his own testimony. Nothing short of that can be of much help. My testimony is simply this, that it is possible to be a modern man, discarding nothing that is essential to intellectual honesty, and still to find, as our fathers found, God in the face of Jesus Christ. For all my twenty years in Christianity, for all my eighteen years of priesthood, I am only a beginner in the faith and practice of my religion. There is vastly much still for me to learn of the Truth as it is in Him. But at least that testimony which I here give I do give from knowledge. I have borne my witness. *Kyrie eleison.*

THE END

NEW YORK
Publishers of BOOKS and of
HARPER'S MAGAZINE
Established 1817